MARCH 10, 2003

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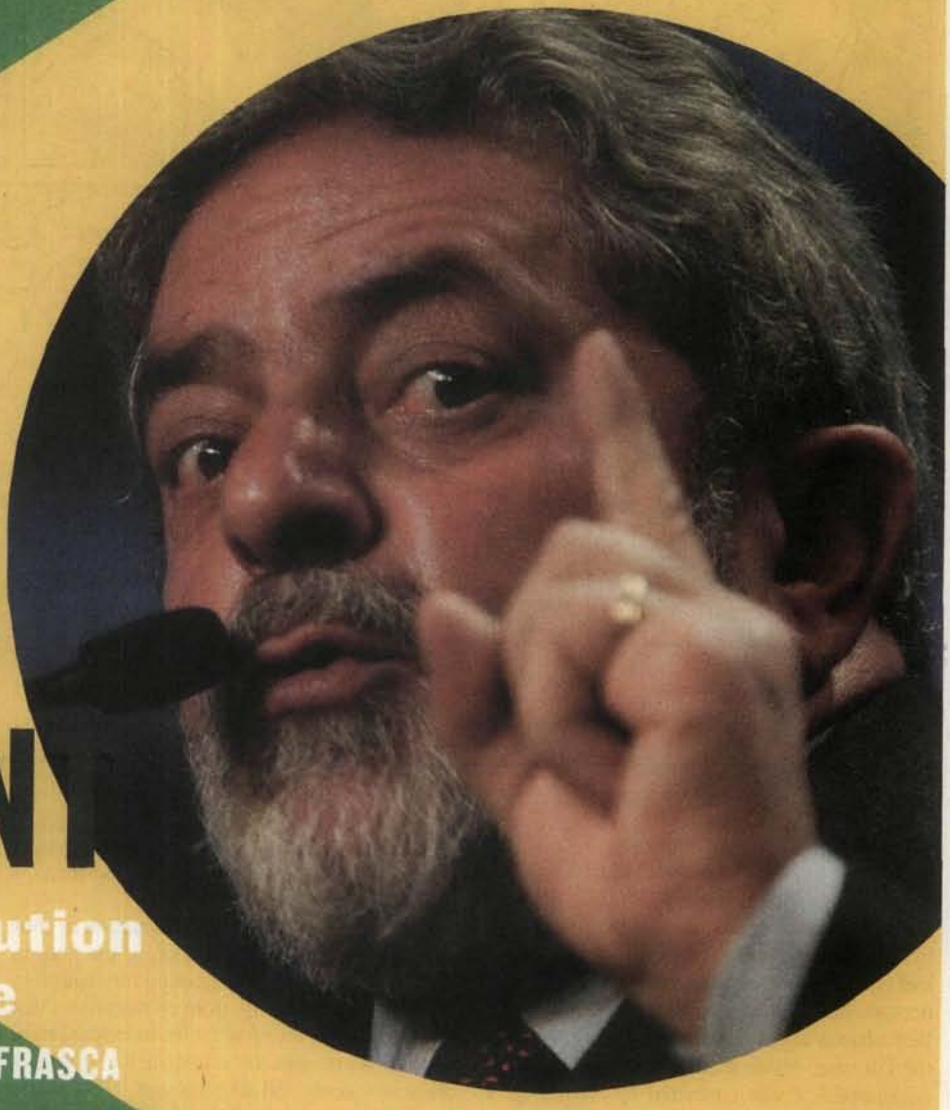

LULA'S MOMENT

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THE QUICK FIX
BY ROBERT GROSSMAN
We've finally got the weapon we've been waiting for...
It hovers in space and can instantly spot anyone on earth who's wearing a beret...
There's Monica Lewinsky.
There's Curtis Sliwa.
And then, if necessary, it fires lightning bolts right into their skulls.
No fuss, no muss!
It's called BERET-DAR.
Test on a crash dummy wearing a beret.
So guess which beret-wearing dictator we're about to use it on today!
A brief period of suspense.
And then:
Did it work?!
Back to the drawing board, I'm afraid.
But we killed everybody in France.

LETTERS

'AMERICAN LYNCHING' BETRAYED

Providence, RI

■ In Rebecca Segall and David Holmberg's review "Who Killed Emmett Till?" [Feb. 3] there are a number of errors, distortions, omissions by inference and untrue statements. I have never had contact with Segall. After speaking to film documentarians Christopher Metress and Keith Beauchamp about certain specifics regarding the Till case, which shall remain protected and confidential, I was contacted by Holmberg. I spoke to him on two occasions in 2002, but our conversations were never supposed to be "on the record." In mid-January, after learning that I might be mentioned in a *Nation* piece, I contacted Holmberg. He was evasive. When I did obtain the article in printed form, I was appalled at what had been written and by what was ascribed to me and my work.

My assistants and I have investigated certain aspects of the Till case relevant to my film *American Lynching*, but our upcoming documentary is in no way focused on that event alone. Since I began working on this project in March 1999, I have interviewed witnesses, family members, friends, descendants of lynching victims and occasionally perpetrators of lynching events. Like any filmmaker or journalist, I strive to protect my sources.

Holmberg provided misinformation to your readers by not accurately quoting me and, in several instances, by misquoting me regarding my supposed subjects—from conversations that were strictly off the record. One individual erroneously mentioned by name in the troubling piece later contacted me by phone. "This article has ruined my family!" he said. I never identified any individual when speaking to Holmberg, neither confirming nor denying his speculative assumptions. I certainly did not quote any source by name at any time. Holmberg's actions have cast *The Nation* in a dreadful light.

GODE DAVIS

HOLMBERG REPLIES

Montclair, NJ

■ At no time did I tell Gode Davis that our conversations were off the record. And he refers to inaccuracies in our piece but doesn't cite any. Also, as we said in our story, the individual mentioned had been referred to in a 1970 newspaper story obtained by filmmaker Keith Beauchamp. Davis confirmed to me that he'd been dealing with a person by that name.

Davis is upset in part because I told him in our initial conversation that I was writing for another publication, which I was at the time. When that piece didn't work out and I subsequently informed him I was writing for *The Nation*, he expressed concern that our review would jeopardize his ambitious film on lynching and perhaps compromise his sources.

As I told him then, I'm sympathetic with his concerns, but I don't consider it journalistically responsible to indefinitely withhold possibly important information about a historically significant case. And as a practical matter, it's not possible in a competitive journalistic environment. I did, however, ask a reliable law-enforcement source in Mississippi about Davis's concerns, and he assured me his agency would not attempt to subpoena any material of Davis's that did not relate to the Emmett Till case. I

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COMMENT

The Will of the World

Jonathan Schell, who last week compellingly argued "The Case Against the War" in these pages, this week assesses the power and meaning of the global antiwar demonstrations. —The Editors

February 15, 2003, the day 10 million or so people in hundreds of cities on every continent demonstrated against war in Iraq, will go down in history as the first time that the people of the world expressed their clear and concerted will in regard to a pressing global issue. Never before—not during the Vietnam War, not during the antinuclear demonstrations of the early 1980s—had they made known their will so forcefully by all the means at their disposal. On that day, history may one day record, global democracy was born.

Several elements unexpectedly (isn't the spontaneous expression of a people's will always unexpected?) snapped into place, like the components on an assembly line. One was a concatenation of opinion polls, showing that in the vast majority of the countries in which people were free to express their views, they opposed war against Iraq unless sanctioned by the United Nations. In every European country, a majority of the public supports this view. In Italy, whose government supports war, 85 percent of the public opposes it. Elsewhere, the figures are the same. In Thailand, for example, 75 percent oppose a war. In Uruguay, the figure is 79 percent. In Pakistan, it is 60 percent. Even in the United States, where poll results were mixed, a *New York Times* poll showed that 56 percent of the public favored war only with UN sanction. The news brought by these polls is political dynamite. Once upon a time, public opinion polls were of only secondary importance. Now, as every officeholder knows, they have moved to center stage. They are a prime currency of power: Poll numbers in the political realm are the equivalent of stock prices in the corporate realm. Polls are, in effect, periodic off-year elections, which not only may predict the real elections on which continuation in power depends but also affect the moment-to-moment ability of leaders to pass legislation, to rally the public to a cause and so forth. Their importance in the present context was revealed unmistakably when Gerhard Schröder of Germany and Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea won the leadership of their countries on peace platforms.

The worldwide demonstrations put faces on these numbers. It was as if the antiwar majorities around the world were saying, "You have heard about us in the opinion polls; you have seen our views expressed in percentages and graphs: how many are against war under any circumstance, how many against it without a UN vote, how many think it's all about oil and so forth. Well, here we are—in our millions, yet each of us a visible individual, carrying an individual sign, often homemade (in New York, one read, MY PLANET, RIGHT OR WRONG), as if some global schoolteacher had given us all the following assignment: Say what's wrong with the war on Iraq in ten words or less." The shift from answering a pollster's question at dinnertime to marching on the street was a critical one. Of all the possible forms of participation, giving your view to a pollster is probably the least active. Indeed, poll respondents *must not* be governed by self-propulsion, which is the essence of political participation; they must be chosen and contacted at random by the pollster. Otherwise, the result will be biased. Marching in a demonstration, by contrast, is among the most active forms of participation in political life. Demonstrators have bestirred themselves, put off other plans, braved the elements, flung themselves into action. They mean business. Even a passionate, engaged minority can, by appearing en masse in the streets, have a powerful influence on the body politic. When, as in the present case, the demonstrating minority is the tip of a majoritarian iceberg, the effect is multiplied many times over.

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COMMENT

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When terrorists attacked the Pentagon and knocked down the World Trade Center on September 11, everyone marveled that nineteen men had coordinated their actions for evil with such efficiency. On February 15, 10 million coordinated their actions for good. February 15 was the people's answer to September 11.

The splendor of this global display of opinion was only thrown into sharper relief by the public silence in the countries where expression of public opinion is not allowed. The Chinese people were notably missing from the instant global agora. So were the North Koreans. The latter were in fact present at gigantic demonstrations—but these were compulsory ones, organized by the government, not to call for peace but to participate in grandiose and absurd birthday celebrations for the dictator Kim Jong Il. He loves his people so much that on his birthday he permits them to eat white rice two days in a row. In Iraq, too, there were compelled demonstrations designed to mimic the spontaneous ones elsewhere, but there, as in North Korea, forced peals of praise for the head of state were the order of the day.

The leadership of the European Union, which had been divided on the war, got the point of the demonstrations on their continent soon enough. In a meeting of the EU's heads of state on Monday, it voted to give the UN inspectors in Iraq more time. It called for a peaceful solution—with war to be considered "only as a last resort"—because, the official statement said, "it is clear that this is what the people of Europe want." Romano Prodi, president of the European Commission, said even more simply, "People want peace." In fact, people wanted peace on every continent where public opinion could be measured.

One more element has been of the first importance. Not only has the human species made its will known; it also possesses an institution—now in session—for effectuating that will: the United Nations. The UN is often denigrated as a "debating society." One reason is that a "democratic deficit" is built into its very structure. No one elects its representatives. Like agency heads or cabinet ministers, they are appointees, creatures of government. To national publics, therefore, the UN often seems remote, abstract and, above all, powerless. The clear expression of the world's will repaired the UN's democratic deficit. It is entirely fitting at this moment that South Africa has invoked a provision of the Charter that permits the voices of countries of the General Assembly to be heard in the elite Security Council. The great majority have expressed opposition to war.

The UN delegates are still not elected, and the public is still not invited to sit at their councils, but now they have the wind of public opinion at their backs. They are "representatives" in a way that they have never been before. For the first time in the history of the institution, the "we the peoples of the United Nations" invoked in the UN Charter is not an abstraction. The "we" has spoken—not through its governments but directly to its representatives in the international body. Moreover, it has done so in the name of the goal that is the UN's prime reason for existing: peace. The United States and Great Britain have sought to use the UN as an instrument of war. The world has said No.

Can a war that the world and its assembled representatives have explicitly rejected still occur? Unfortunately, it can. Yet the events of February 15—and their repercussions in Europe and else-

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where—have radically altered the calculus of possibilities. Before the 15th, the war seemed unstoppable—inevitable. This alleged inevitability, indeed, has probably in fact been the strongest of the "arguments" for the war. Now, for the first time, it is conceivable that if enough people place enough specific, concrete pressure on their governments, the war can be prevented.

We—that is, we, the peoples of the earth—have examined the case for war against Iraq and rejected it. We have stepped forward onto the streets of our cities and looked at ourselves, and have liked what we saw. We know our will. Now we must act. We can stop the war.

Jonathan Schell is the Harold Willens Peace Fellow at the Nation Institute.

Europe on the March

London

So this is what it feels like to be in the political mainstream. As we turned into Piccadilly Circus on February 15, and the two lines of march, each larger than any demonstration in British history, converged into a gigantic human current flowing very, very slowly toward Hyde Park, a junior member of *The Nation*'s London bureau posed the essential question: "Are we nearly there yet?"

Certainly we are a lot closer than before the weekend's massive show of opposition to war against Iraq. In demonstrations, size matters, and to have turnout so far in excess of the organizers' wildest hopes, not just here in London, where more than a million protesters took to the streets, but in Rome (2 million), Barcelona (1.3 million), Sydney (200,000) and Melbourne (150,000) is the strongest possible indication that the people remain unconvinced—even, or perhaps especially, in countries whose leaders are content to follow George W. Bush to Baghdad, and whose mass media are filled with dossiers of Iraqi menace.

All of Britain seemed to be on the march: activists, anarchists, stockbrokers, retired soldiers, Muslims, Jews, Anglican priests, Catholic nuns, Buddhist monks and a group of young Iranian women in headscarves carrying a banner opposed to IMPERIALISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM. Many were first-time protesters; middle England was out in force. A poster of Blair in a teacup helmet counseled MAKE TEA NOT WAR. A silver-haired man from GARDENERS AGAINST WAR with a hand-lettered sign saying GIVE PEAS A CHANCE marched alongside a contingent of SEX WORKERS AGAINST WAR. There were pre-printed signs from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Muslim Association of Britain and from the Liberal Democrats, whose leader, Charles Kennedy, was an early volunteer to speak at the rally. There were also speeches by veteran campaigners Tariq Ali and Tony Benn, London Mayor Ken Livingstone, pop diva Ms. Dynamite and Jesse Jackson.

The sight of a million people patiently, even politely asking their government to step back from the brink (for every poster calling Bush a murderer there were a dozen addressed to "Mr. Blair") had to give even the most bellicose advocate of "serious consequences" for Iraq cause for reflection. In Glasgow, Tony Blair tried to wrong-foot the demonstrators by making "the moral case for removing Saddam." While he told delegates to the Labour Party spring conference, "I do not seek unpopularity as a badge of honor," more than 30,000 protesters marched through the streets outside. For the past six years Blair has governed from atop an impregnable majority. But his effort to straddle the gap between Europe and the United States on Iraq has already cost him his aura of invincibility. If he follows Bush into war without a second United Nations resolution, it could cost him his job.

Blair is not the only European for whom the stakes are high. Across the Continent, the Bush Administration's crude attempts to strong-arm public opinion—Rumsfeld's remarks about "old Europe," bully-boy threats to pull US troops and US dollars out of Germany, sneers about an "axis of weasels"—have sharpened the sense that America is abandoning the international institutions it once helped to build, no longer even bothering to pay them lip service. In countries where total war is still a living memory, rifts in NATO and the European Union produce profound anxiety. The letter in support of the United States circulated in early February by Blair, Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar and their "gang of eight" confirmed the view that America doesn't give a damn for European unity—and indeed intends to undermine it. Europe's unease has given rise to an apparent paradox: Even at the demonstrations in Greece and Italy Bush was vilified, but old-style, root-of-all-evil anti-Americanism was not much in evidence. The situation is too serious for that now. Last weekend anticapitalist hotheads, middle-aged lefties, party stalwarts and Palestinian activists put aside their own agendas to roar out a deafening warning: The wounded giant's arrogant ambition is putting the world at risk.

Thirty-five years after the Prague Spring and the Paris barricades, Europe is on the move. Are we nearly there yet? Not quite. Those who think a war to liberate Iraq would be a just war (but believe this isn't that war) need to be clear about what would make them reconsider. Those who oppose war unless sanctioned by the UN need to face the possibility (more remote now, but still likely, given US dominance) that there will be a second resolution. We need to talk more about our obligation to the Kurds and the Iraqi people, and stop using oil as a rationale for cynicism. We need to find a way to express differences within the coalition rather than use them as levers to pry it apart. Above all we need to build something out of all the hope and anger on the streets. We need to wed analysis to emotion, and turn momentum into a movement. Still, we are on our feet. D.D. GUTTENPLAN AND MARIA MARGARONIS

D.D. Guttenplan and Maria Margaronis head the Nation *London bureau.*

Kucinich's Antiwar Bid

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Three days after he sued the President to force a Congressional vote on whether to attack Iraq, and one day after hundreds of thousands of antiwar demonstrators in New York cheered his call to turn the tide toward peace, Congressional Progressive Caucus chair Dennis Kucinich was addressing a more down-to-earth issue at the Cedar Rapids Public Library. "It's K-u-c-i-n-i-c-h," he told seventy Linn County Democrats gathered to

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COMMENT

hear the first speech of the Ohio Congressman's bid for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination.

Kucinich may lack the name recognition enjoyed by more centrist contenders, but in the crowded Iowa primary Kucinich found there still might be room for a candidate who says without blushing, "Yes, I am a candidate for peace. I am a candidate for economic justice. I am a candidate for social justice. I am a candidate who says we can change the outcome. We can change this country. We can change this world."

"He's the one Democrat who is—as Paul Wellstone said—from the democratic wing of the Democratic Party," said Gary Sanders, an American Federation of Teachers local president in Iowa City, who noted that Kucinich is the only candidate who voted in Congress against authorizing Bush to wage war on Iraq. "He's been the most courageous on the war. He's got the best labor record. He sounds like one of us, not a warmed-over Republican" [see Studs Terkel, "Kucinich Is the One," May 6, 2002].

As he set the tone for his late-starting, underfinanced candidacy, Kucinich campaigned as much against the message malaise of his own party as against the Republicans. "You want to shake up the Democratic Party?" he asked an Iowa City activist who backed Ralph Nader in 2000. "Send me inside the Democratic primaries as your candidate, and we will shake this party so much that we get it right."

"I find myself being excited by what you are saying, which is strange for me because I have never supported a major party candidate in my adult life," said former Iowa City Council member Karen Kubby, director of Iowa City's Emma Goldman Clinic. But she was not signing a volunteer card. She grilled Kucinich on his opposition to reproductive rights. "I have a hard time reconciling all the things you are saying about economic and social justice with the positions you have taken on abortion rights."

"I've had a tough time with abortion. It has not been an easy journey for me," Kucinich replied, before explaining that he now supports a woman's right to choose, that he would veto any attempt to limit that right, that he would not nominate judges who would seek to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and that he favors Medicaid funding for abortions as part of a program to provide pregnant women a full range of choices. That answer left some dissatisfied.

For Kucinich, the trek to Iowa provided a dose of political reality. In a state where the caucus system heightens the influence of antiwar and labor activists who are most likely to rally to his candidacy, he found a warm response but something short of a full embrace. "Democrats here want to hear the antiwar message. They want to hear the FDR-Democrat message, and Kucinich can probably deliver it better than anyone else," says David Loebsack, a Cornell College political science professor and one of Iowa's savviest progressive Democrats. "But it's going to take some convincing, even in Iowa, for Kucinich to get beyond the choice issue and to get Democrats thinking this guy—who a lot of them are still getting to know—could be their candidate."

Well aware that, in a sped-up competition designed to reward candidates with more money and establishment support, he will need a strong showing in the first caucus state to sustain a serious candidacy, Kucinich says he's ready to do that convincing. "Everything I know about politics tells me Iowa Democrats, like Democrats everywhere, are desperate for a real alternative to Bush," he says. "I'm determined to give it to them." JOHN NICHOLS

CALVIN TRILLIN

On the Backlash Against the Perfidious French

They're relegated to the side.
This role—which they cannot abide,
Which torments Frenchmen day and night—
Can make them do things out of spite.
But could it be the French are right?

And, yes, it sometimes makes one boil
To see what they will do for oil.
For when it comes to heat and light,
Their principles are not in sight.
But could it be the French are right?

And, sure, they come on rather strong
If you pronounce a diphthong wrong.
And even if you're quite contrite,
They often fail to be polite.
But could it be the French are right?

Yes, could it be these French, despite
The things about them you could cite
(That what they write is often quite
Confused as well as recondite,
That all this Gallic appetite
For food and wine can seem so trite,
That they don't love to stand and fight,
Nor bathe as often as they might)
By chance are, in this instance, right?

Corporate Bill for Slavery

On February 26 for the first time a judge will make substantive and procedural rulings on a probable eight lawsuits that are at the cutting edge of the movement to compensate African-Americans who still suffer from the effects of slavery and institutionalized racism. There are at least thirteen plaintiffs, all descendants of slaves. Thousands more could be added. One of the plaintiffs is 71-year-old Hannah Hurdle-Toomey. Her father (who was 87 at the time of her birth, in 1932) was born into slavery on a North Carolina plantation in 1845 and sold at auction when he was 8. "We literally built this country," says Hurdle-Toomey. "It's

(Continued on Page 24)

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EDWARD SOREL & RICHARD LINGEMAN

Religion in the News

Graven Images

At the behest of the religious right, local governments have erected tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments at courthouses and other public buildings. Next, taxpayers or the ACLU sues to remove the images, and a federal court invariably rules that they violate the establishment clause of the First Amendment. That's what happened in Alabama, Indiana, Nebraska, Maryland, Kentucky, Colorado and Tennessee. So then the local authorities are stuck with the job of disposing of the tablets and paying the legal bills. In Chattanooga, where they owed $8,900, the county commissioners figured out an ingenious solution—auction off the tablets. Despite legal setbacks, the tablets keep coming. In Haines City, Florida, the Rev. Mickey Carter heads a plan to install a Foundation Rock in the taxpayer-funded Polk County Administration center. He apparently thinks he can outwit the ACLU by displaying documents of other cultures, such as Hammurabi's Code, as well as the Bill of Rights. But Hindus and Muslims need not apply. "If they want to go to India or Pakistan and put up their own rock, that's fine," Reverend Carter said.

Mooning the Saint

Saint Goncalo has been attributed the power to heal hemorrhoids. Sufferers flock to a church in Murtosa, Portugal, his birthplace. For maximum efficacy they are said to expose their behinds to a statue of the saint. The statue is also considered a cure for acne. One badly afflicted woman wanted to pray naked in the church, but the local priest put a stop to that.

The Mary Watch

Sightings of the Virgin Mary were reported recently in four remote villages in northern Saskatchewan. Details were sketchy, but Bertha Durocher of Beauval said Mary's face appeared in her picture window. One of the most famous Canadian sightings was back in 1998 at Tim Horton's doughnut shop. The Holy Mother has been making appearances for centuries, of course. According to Reuters, she has showed up "in media as diverse as glass, water, a burrito and a Camaro."

His Mysterious Ways

Many athletes these days publicly thank God, Jesus or the Virgin Mary for enabling them to win the Super Bowl or whatever. But Jon (Sherlock) Kitna, quarterback of the Cincinnati Bengals, gave thanks for his team's 2-14 season, saying it was all part of God's plan: "For whatever reason right now, this is what's best for us." Meanwhile, the Bengals hired a new coach.

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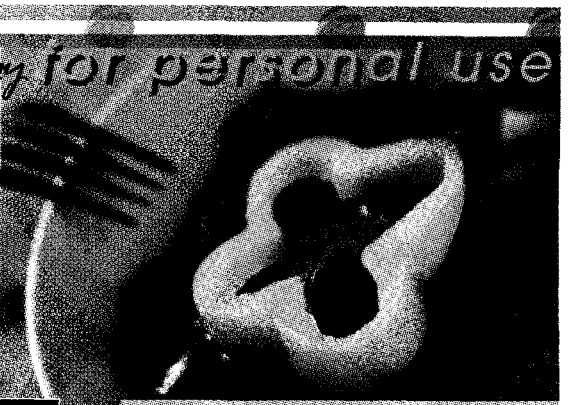

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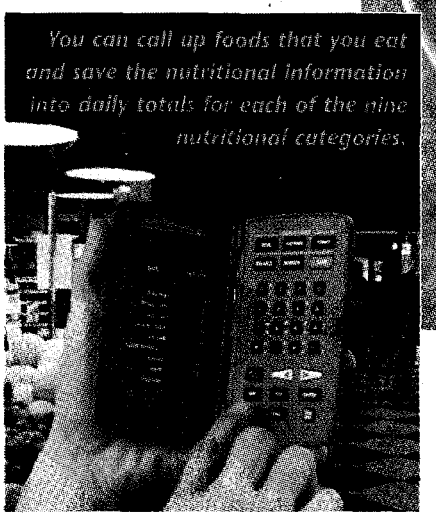
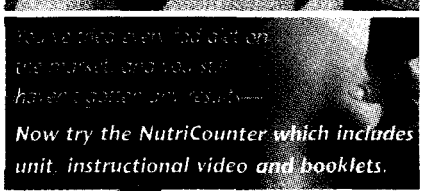

You can call up foods that you eat and save the nutritional information into daily totals for each of the nine nutritional categories.



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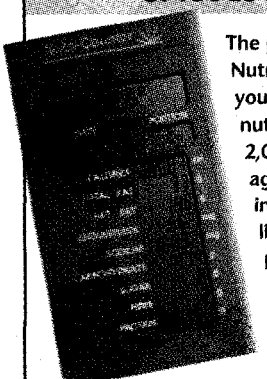

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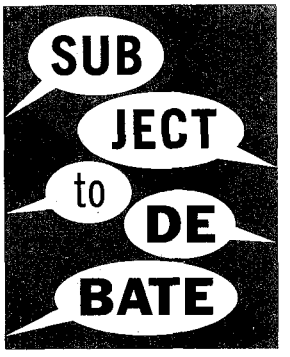
KATHA POLLITT

Not Too Late?



The February 15 demonstration in New York was huge, exciting, exhilarating—despite the weather (brrrr) and the heavy hand of the NYPD (see below). It seemed like the whole city was there, and the suburbs too—all races, colors, creeds, sexes and genders, every age from stroller to wheelchair and every type from energetic Latino teens with the El Puente program in Brooklyn to elegant women in ankle-length raccoon coats. Costumes and props abounded: There was the Green Man with his ivy crown, EARTH BE WEARY OF WAR sign and oddly fascinating praying mantis hand puppet; the rhinestone-drenched Fairy Godmothers of Peace and Jobs from Chicago; Take Back the Future with their fifteen-foot Constitution-devouring worm. Lots of variations on the theme of duct tape: One man was got up as a walking window covered in tape and plastic, another wore a suit entirely covered in duct tape and bearing the inscription DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY'S SPRING LINE. The Bread and Puppet Theater was in fine fettle with dozens of spur-of-the-moment extras (including me) and lots of musicians playing New Orleans jazz on instruments customary and strange. (Let me apologize for cranky words at the BPT's expense last year. Maybe they need a big energetic crowd as background canvas for their large gestures and huge papier-mâché creations. Or maybe I just needed to wield a puppet myself.) Among the diverse collection of speakers, Desmond Tutu, the performance artist Sarah Jones, Tamina from the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (remember Afghan women?) and fiery Donna Lieberman of the NYCLU stood out. Mercifully, unlike in Washington in January, no imams warned us that we would be lost unless we found the true path of faith.

About that heavy hand. In a truly outrageous series of rulings, which violated not just the First Amendment but also longstanding New York political tradition, the courts upheld Mayor Bloomberg's denial of a permit for a march down First Avenue past the United Nations, on the ground that it would be too dangerous to monitor for terrorist activity. Those orange alerts do more than boost sales of plastic sheeting, it appears. Never mind that there's never been a problem with permits for the St. Patrick's Day parade, which routinely results in drunken brawls and a few years ago even a murder, or the Puerto Rican Day parade, which three years ago ended in the molestation of dozens of women in Central Park. The NYPD's Michael Esposito admitted that no permit had been granted for a political march since 9/11; the Justice Department filed a letter of interest urging that UN security be taken into consideration—who did they think would be marching? Osama bin Laden?

The result of this blinkered, timorous decision was a wild afternoon. Thousands, barred by police from the designated rally area on First Avenue and 49th Street on up, tied up traffic on Second and Third; thousands left, discouraged, even as others, unknowing, streamed forward and still others were penned by lines of cops and metal barricades into side streets. Mounted police charged into the crowd; more than 250 people were arrested, mostly on minor charges. (If you had a bad experience with the police, the NYCLU would like to hear your story at nyclu215@aol.com.)

Still, none of this dampened the sense of a global tide beginning to turn, as reports came in on handheld radios of similar manifestations around the globe—including a million or more each in Rome, London, Madrid and Barcelona, numbers that emphatically made the point that while Silvio Berlusconi, Tony Blair and José María Aznar may back the Bush Administration's war plans, the citizenry have other ideas. When polls show 90 percent of Britishers opposed to invading Iraq, it's no answer for prowar columnists to rail one more time against protesters as flower-powered dupes of Stalinists and Islamic fundamentalists. It's becoming increasingly clear that the romantic humanitarian-imperialist scenario beloved of journalists—in which, without significant bloodshed, Saddam and his henchmen are ousted in favor of peace, secularism, democracy and prosperity, triggering similar transformations throughout the region—is a very long shot indeed for all kinds of reasons, one of them being the Administration's lack of commitment to it. Even Kanan Makiya, the most prominent Iraqi advocate of "regime change" through invasion, is beginning to sense that Iraqi democracy is not in the Administration's cards: In a remarkable cry of despair published in the February 16 London *Observer* he rages that US plans for postinvasion Iraq include the betrayal of the Kurds, the sidelining of the Iraqi National Congress and, beneath a top layer of US military brass, the continued hegemony of the Baath party—Baathism without Saddam.

Will the antiwar movement be able to thwart the ongoing move toward war? It's hard to imagine: The troopships keep sailing, and Bush seems willing to go it alone if need be to protect, as he claims, the nation's "security." Still, as radio journalist Laura Flanders points out, the blizzard that blanketed the city two days later in a beautiful, deep and sparkling peacefulness can serve as a metaphor of how quickly change can happen.

* * *

Back in May, I received brickbats, whatever they are, for a column titled "Regressive Progressive?" in which I pointed out Dennis Kucinich's little-noticed 100 percent antichoice voting record and modestly suggested that if he wanted to run for President he would have to rethink his willingness to force pregnant women to give birth. A surprising number of readers felt prochoicers should shut up about their silly little issue and embrace Kucinich in the interests of progressive unity. Fortunately, Kucinich is more sensible and less sexist than these benighted admirers. In recent abortion-related votes he has taken the pro-choice side and now, just in time for his announcement of his presidential bid, affirms *Roe v. Wade* on his website. *National Review Online* attributed this change of heart to "a tiny article" in *The Nation* (thanks a lot). I'd rather credit Kucinich's own instinct for what is right and fair in a pluralist society. Better late than never! ■

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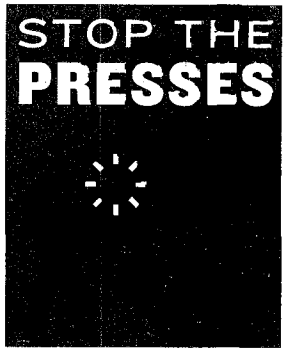
ERIC ALTERMAN

Bad News, Film at 11



Like almost everything these days, local TV news is awful and getting worse. The FCC, under free-market ideologue Michael Powell, is preparing to relax ownership limits to allow further concentration of power and influence in the hands of just a few corporations. What's more, Powell says he will allow just one public hearing—on February 27 in Richmond, Virginia—before issuing the new rules. The less the public knows, in other words, the better.

We have been down this path before, when, following the (all but uncovered by the media) passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, commercial radio became transformed from our most vibrant and democratic form of mass communication to its current zombielike status. Clear Channel, the industry's dominant player, owns more than 1,200 US stations, compared with fewer than 200 owned by its rival, Viacom, according to a *Wall Street Journal* count. Its executives are so cheap they won't even invest enough money to provide communities with local DJs, preferring to scam listeners with phony cutaways to people and places its long-distance jocks have neither seen nor met.

The primary reason that local TV coverage is so awful is the same reason that Warren Beatty, playing John Reed in *Reds*, identified as the cause of the carnage of World War I: profits. As the *Washington Post*'s Robert Kaiser and Len Downie Jr. demonstrated in their book *The News About the News*, pay in local TV is a lot higher than it is in print journalism, depleting its limited resources. Kaiser and Downie note that in Raleigh, North Carolina, the city's three network anchors together make more than the entire payroll of 260 at the local paper, the *News & Observer*. Meanwhile, local TV news owners demand profits of anywhere from 40 to 70 percent. At their own company, Post/Newsweek, stations demand more than double the profits that the *Washington Post* earns, while providing an unarguably inferior product. The company's president defends this practice with the nonsensical quip, "The viewers are not unhappy."

But if they're not unhappy, they should be. And so should we, whether we watch local television or not. It's not just that crappy news leads to a badly informed citizenry—which it does—it can also be destructive of the most important elements of our social compact and intensely reactionary—even racist—in its implications for our society. According to a recent study by the Pew-funded Project on Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) published in *Columbia Journalism Review*, despite declining figures crime coverage rose in 2001, while coverage of virtually everything else—even the economy—fell. As Robert Entman and Andrew Rojecki demonstrate at length in their study *The Black Image in the White Mind*, this "if it bleeds, it leads" mentality vastly overemphasizes crime stories at the expense of all others. It also exaggerates the degree to which criminals are alleged to be black and victims white. And at the same time, they ignore virtually every conceivable social cause of crime, such as lack of economic or educational opportunity, wide availability of drugs, lack of local role models, etc. As I argue in my spanking new book, *What Liberal Media? The Truth About Bias and the News*, it doesn't require a doctorate in sociology to understand that the newsmedia contribute to ignorance-based racism rather than ameliorating it.

Well, times for local TV broadcasts are now tougher than ever. The PEJ/CJR study notes that reporters are now required to produce an average of 1.8 stories a day, the heaviest workload reported in the five years since PEJ began its study. According to one Montana news director, quoted in *CJR*, "Ratings, style, story-count, pacing, hair and clothes seem more important on a given day than content and issues." Another news executive, this one from Texas, complains, "Owners even from top media companies…have very little interest in the quality of their broadcast product."

The irony thickens when one discovers that all this dumbing-down of newscasts repels viewers rather than attracts them. The PEJ study analyzed more than 1,200 hours of news and more than 30,000 stories and suggests that by several measures "quality…is the most likely path to commercial success." This is true even when measured incrementally. The higher a station's quality score, the more it gained in market share.

No less worrisome, therefore, is the fact that the networks that own so many of these stations are too dim to understand this fact. According to yet another PEJ analysis, this one just released on February 17, TV stations controlled by large group owners—including the major networks and their biggest affiliates—generally produce lower-quality newscasts than do their smaller rivals. And "stations controlled by affiliates get higher marks for quality than do those owned and operated by ABC, CBS, NBC or Fox."

This is important because one of the primary arguments the networks make, and that Powell enthusiastically endorses, is that bigger is better, because bigger brings more resources to news coverage and allows them to be spread over vaster and more efficient economies of scale. This is exactly the same argument made by Clear Channel, let it be recalled, which then proceeded to destroy both the quality and local character of the stations it purchased. The then-CEO of its radio unit, Randy Michaels, told the *Wall Street Journal*, "We can produce higher-quality programming at a lower cost in markets where we could never afford the talent."

Here's the kind of "higher-quality programming" Michaels apparently had in mind: In Boise, KISS FM listeners heard a DJ named "Cabana Boy Geoff" Alan explain, "On Saturday night, me and Smooch, we were hanging out at The Big Easy.… Just thinking about it, I'm cracking up." In fact, as the *Journal* reported, Alan taped the program in San Diego, *before* the Saturday in question. He had never set foot in Boise in his life, and incidentally, "Smooch" showed up at The Big Easy on Friday, not Saturday. If Michael Powell gets his way—and he will—you can expect this kind of "reporting" coming to a local TV program near you. ■

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ARTICLES

LULA'S MOMENT

Brazil's Revolution of the Possible

By MARC COOPER and TIM FRASCA

Porto Alegre, Brazil

"We cannot have some eating five times a day while others go five days without eating," Brazil's newly installed president, Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva, told an appreciative crowd here on January 24. But what would be boilerplate in another context, tossed out by one more off-the-shelf Latin American populist to generate de rigueur roars from the faithful, was, in this context, strangely and quietly moving.

For starters, Lula—whose January 1 inauguration was dubbed the "first high point of the international left since the fall of the Berlin wall" by his adviser and renowned radical Catholic theologian Frei Betto—isn't your everyday populist. All Brazil knows how Lula was born in poverty and how his major campaign promise was to wipe out hunger. So when he spoke at the third annual World Social Forum, many of the 75,000 listeners at the Pôr-do-Sol outdoor amphitheater looked down and shook their heads; some wept. None left charged up and ready to chant party slogans or shake their fists in the air. Instead, the mostly Brazilian crowd melted away in a pensive mood, aware that this historic presidency and the entrance of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT) into the government may be their last chance to make a humane country out of their grotesquely unfair society.

Brazil has the ninth-largest economy in the world but ranks fourth-worst on the globe in the gap between rich and poor—right behind Sierra Leone, the Central African Republic and Swaziland. Ten million citizens live chronically undernourished, while the Brazilian elite ring their highrises and helipads with razor wire and commute to Miami for weekend shopping binges. Today's Brazil, said Frei Betto, represents nothing less than "an offense to God."

President Lula attracted only two rounds of boos during his address: once when he outlined his plans for the next four years ("EIGHT! EIGHT!" the crowd insisted) and again when he mentioned his imminent trip to the rival World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, to plead for the poor before the assembled planetary plutocracy ("DON'T GO! STAY!"). Everyone acknowledges that the PT administration faces vast difficulties,

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the **nature** of change

ORION

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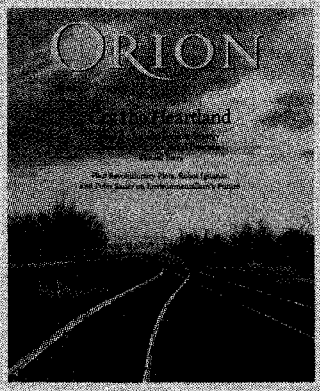

In the March/April issue of *Orion*

WENDELL BERRY

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but disagreements are quickly emerging about the proper course for it to take: how far to negotiate with Brazil's adversaries in the wealthy North, and the precise location of the slippery slope where principles are abandoned and Lula, as one insider critic quipped, molts "from president into chief bookkeeper for the International Monetary Fund."

So while the debate thirty years ago around a similar leftist Latin American president—Chile's Salvador Allende—focused on the broad philosophical question of whether a peaceful transition to socialism was possible, today's interrogatives are more immediate, more pragmatic, more concrete: What is the likelihood of even minimal reform within the margins of the international financial architecture? What alternatives to the neoliberal "Washington Consensus" are possible? Can Brazil take regional leadership in fighting for fairer trade relationships with the United States? In short, how practical is a peaceful transition to anything beyond the unacceptable status quo? And, most important, how can Lula balance the pressing needs of a desperate Brazil with the intransigencies of the global market? "Expectations have never been higher," said Kjeld Jakobsen, until recently international relations secretary of Brazil's Central Labor Federation and an ardent Lula partisan. "Everyone knows that change is going to be slow and difficult—Lula said so in his campaign. But you never know just how long this expectation can be delayed before it all collapses."

Lula won the presidency in October with an unprecedented 61 percent of the popular vote, after nearly copping an outright majority in the first round. It was his fourth attempt as the standard-bearer of the PT, an amalgam of liberation Catholics, trade unionists and assorted leftist intellectuals that emerged from the long struggle against Brazil's vicious military dictatorship (1964–85). At age 57, short and paunchy with a whitening beard, Lula is nevertheless an extraordinary, Lincolnesque figure. One of eight siblings from an impoverished town in the arid northeast, his family migrated to gritty São Paulo, where he left grade school to shine shoes, and apprenticed as a metalworker at 14. He entered politics through trade-union activities, which also landed him in jail for a brief stint. In the shadow of Brazil's military dictatorship, Lula led the rejuvenation of the national labor movement and engineered the building of the PT—a sui generis mass leftist party that is neither orthodox Marxist nor social democratic but somewhere in between.

Although now more polished and groomed, Lula is not considered a great orator and was often belittled by his enemies over his struggles with Portuguese grammar. In fact, he belongs to another century, before the advent of the Bob Forehead–type politician, the golem hatched and shepherded by imagemakers and nurtured with cash channeled from on high. As he phrases it, "I wasn't elected by a TV network or because of my intelligence or personality but through the high level of political awareness of the Brazilian people." And unstated, but always present, is the fact that Lula isn't just the first president to be *for* the Brazilian poor, but to actually *be* one of them.

Lula's first month in office illustrated the PT's awareness of the importance of symbols in holding together its popular majority. The president's executive jets were mothballed, the gourmet cook dismissed and plans to spend $760 million on a

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fleet of new fighter planes were postponed. Lula then led his entire Cabinet on a two-day "reality tour" of one of northeastern Brazil's vast swaths of misery. At its conclusion, a teary-eyed Luiz Fernando Furlan, one of the few businessmen in the government, said he will be forever marked by the experience. "Without a doubt," he said, "I'll be more socially aware." Lula also immediately raised Brazil's international profile, offering trade assistance and political support to languishing Argentina and mediation in the Venezuelan crisis engulfing Hugo Chávez (in the latter case, keeping a studied distance from the messianic ex-comandante). Most dramatically, Lula set off for the Swiss Alps to take his message of fairness and equity straight into the lion's den at Davos.

Lula's twenty-eight Cabinet appointments broke precedent left and right, and are in themselves a mini-revolution. Two are black—a first—and another seven are unionists. Environment Minister Marina da Silva, a former rubber cutter, learned to read at age 16; Benedita da Silva, the Minister for Social Development, used to pick through rubbish during her upbringing in a Rio slum. José Dirceu, Lula's chief of staff and top strategist, was trained as a guerrilla fighter in Cuba and reentered Brazil after plastic surgery; his own wife didn't know his real identity until years later.

Lula's strategy includes building alliances with national capitalists devastated by the past decade's free-market policies.

But while the social portfolios all went to the left, Lula packed his economic team with conservatives: Vice President José Alencar is a textile magnate, and Central Bank president Henrique Meirelles is orthodox enough to calm the troubled sleep of Brazil's Wall Street investors and inspectors. Indeed, there is ample room for skeptics to suggest that the great Lula experiment might soon have to abandon its radical pretensions because of international financial pressures, a possibility its chief architects deny. "We are only in the government now because we did not and will not forget our past, nor will we abandon our ideals," answers Dirceu. "But there is no possibility of change without alliances among different political sectors."

Lula's going to need some real and productive alliances to achieve his major campaign vow: to eradicate hunger, which afflicts at least the 24 million citizens who are officially destitute and a good many of the 30 million more who survive under the poverty line, out of a total population of 174 million. The obstacles are daunting: Unemployment in the main industrial region of São Paulo hovers near 20 percent, the economy is anemic and inflation remains pesky. Per capita income has dropped sharply in recent years. In addition, Brazil is second only to the United States in cocaine consumption, and its powerful drug gangs almost co-govern Rio de Janeiro, whose murder rate is 50 percent higher than that of Washington, DC.

But the darkest and most immediate storm cloud on the horizon is the burden of Brazil's crushing debt, now the equivalent of 65 percent of GDP, compared with 45 percent for Argentina when it went belly up in 2001. Lula's predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, promised that opening the country to a torrent of foreign capital would be a quick route to economic modernization. As usual, things didn't quite work out that way, but before leaving office Cardoso secured a front-loaded bridging loan through the IMF that some consider impossible for Brazil to pay. The country's new leaders will go into debt negotiations enormously vulnerable not only to IMF demands but, lurking close behind, speculative pressures on the country's currency, which could quickly throw Brazil into an economic tailspin.

Lula desperately needs breathing room to start work on his ambitious program: land reform, overhaul of the tax and pension systems and minimum-wage increases, as well as Zero Hunger. Underlying the strategy is an implicit shift of Brazil's economic model away from dependence on exports and foreign capital and back to industrial production and concentration on the internal market. That's what Dirceu means about building alliances—specifically, with national capitalists devastated by the past decade's free-market policies. "The project is schizophrenic after all the concessions," said Luis Fernando Novoa, a sociologist and member of the PT's organized left wing—about a third of the party. Brazil's big industrialists support Lula, said Novoa, because he has promised continuity and is "more Catholic than the Pope" on the debt question. Instead, he said, Lula should initiate a deep transformation to "a real national development project, not just redistribute the crumbs left by the IMF."

Left-wing criticism of Lula, including from respected, longtime militants and parliamentary deputies, is already dogging the new administration. Some of it is less serious, but expressive. At a news conference in Porto Alegre, a woman claiming to represent "Bakers without Borders" gave current PT president José Genoino a cream pie in the face to protest Lula's attendance at the Davos meeting. On the opposite front, the PT's proximity to the militant land-reform movement may cost it some middle-class support; while Lula triumphed nationwide, the PT lost its governorship of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, of which Porto Alegre is the capital, some say in part because of backlash from farmers. By satisfying the most militant, Lula will always alienate part of his coalition, as in the fight over pensions. Balancing these competing interests will require real skill and the maintenance of a high level of overall credibility.

Some critics clearly expect that to occur, pointing, for example, to the PT's openness to negotiate with the Bush White House on the US-initiated Free Trade Area of the Americas. Until recently some 500 Brazilian products, including all its key exports such as steel, coffee, citrus and soy, were excluded from easier import into the US market. Now reports indicate a possible willingness by the Bush Administration to lower tariffs on some of those items if Brazil sings the FTAA tune. The devil, of course, is still in the details.

These critics suggest that the moderate middle doesn't exist under current circumstances. In a foot race with a speeding auto-

Marc Cooper is a Nation *contributing editor. Tim Frasca is an American journalist based in Santiago, Chile.*

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mobile, some say, it doesn't matter how many gold-medal sprinters you have on your team. If Brazil's debt is in fact unpayable, the prospect of default could threaten the banking system and bury Lula's dreams for good. Indeed, at an evening soiree a few hours after his moving address in Porto Alegre (an industrial city of 1.3 million that has been run by the PT for the past fourteen years), an NGO activist and PT sympathizer predicted that the Lula administration "won't be any different from its predecessor." Zero Hunger, said this dissident, is mere "marketing" to neutralize the left opposition and distract attention away from the plans to proceed with business as usual and solidify all sorts of nefarious alliances. In this view, Lula cannot and will not resist whatever Washington and the IMF overlords dictate.

But Frei Betto, reflecting the low-key optimism of Lula's circle, argued that the forty-year social process that produced Lula is a source of great strength that may not be immediately apparent. "How is it possible to elect a lathe operator to the presidency of the republic?" the friar said with a smile. "Those who ask that question don't understand how over forty years we have built up this popular movement." Brazil, he said, can exercise enormous moral suasion, and the figure of Lula is symbolically compelling.

'People don't expect miracles, but there is a hopeful atmosphere, a change in mentality.'
—Prof. Veriano Terto, a Lula supporter

Furthermore, driving Brazil into bankruptcy is hardly an attractive prospect for some of the biggest banks in the world, like Citigroup, whose exposure here amounts to 10.2 percent of its total equity. If Brazil is pushed beyond its limits and tanks, investors are also liable to take a nasty hit. Twenty percent of all US exports go to Latin America, and US direct investment in the region amounts to $163 billion. The idea of watching Brazil nosedive, taking half the continent's GDP along with it, can't be comforting, even for Republican right ideologues put off by the Lula entourage. And this at least partially explains why Lula has—so far at least—found Washington far more accommodating than Salvador Allende did.

So for every sworn enemy, for every commentator already comparing him to Fidel, Lula has plenty of allies in the world of business, among them many members of the financial press. Conservative writers suggest that he might be capable of combining reform with stability, which is increasingly undermined by the ever-grosser inequalities Lula wants to address. Bad alternative examples abound, such as bankrupted Argentina, polarized Venezuela and the new populism in Ecuador, embodied in recently seated President Lucio Gutierrez, a politically untested former army officer. The conservatives' cautious, wait-and-see attitude reflects a grudging recognition that the orthodox models, while good for quick profits, have failed to resolve the continent's long-term structural problems. Brazil might provide, mused Britain's *Prospect Magazine*, "a social democratic model for Latin America."

One area where Lula, the IMF, the World Bank and Wall Street may find themselves in harmony is on the new government's determination to revamp Brazil's demented retirement system, termed by the newsweekly *Veja* as "Robin Hood in reverse." The country's coffers are currently drained of some $2 billion a year to cover the growing deficit caused by the civil service elite's pension arrangements. While private-sector retirees may get $100 a month, public servants average $650, military officers over $1,000 and federal judges $4,200. Lula and the PT's announcement that they would go after this system's skewed priorities immediately raised howls of protest from the vested interests. But the PT will be backed on this one by its erstwhile foes at the IMF, albeit in the name of cutting back government spending and "making markets work."

At the Porto Alegre cocktail party, the Lula skeptic had few takers for his business-as-usual analysis. Instead, all the others seemed sympathetic to the new government. "When Lula talks, it gets to you," said one partygoer, while others nodded in agreement. "He has a knack for touching a chord, and it's not calculated. His awkwardness, if anything, makes it more real." Said another Lula supporter, anthropology professor Veriano Terto, "People don't expect miracles, but there is a hopeful atmosphere, a change in mentality." If the PT makes gains at the next municipal elections, he said, its skill at administering innovative projects at the local level would generate important new support.

Upcoming trade talks with the United States will be the big test. Lula has repeatedly called the proposed FTAA nothing less than an "annexation" of the Brazilian economy. No surprise, then, that Brazil—conscious of its role as the key player on the continent—clearly wants to get tough and insist that the terms not be dictated by Washington. On the other hand, reaching an agreement with real benefits for both sides—overcoming low growth without too much radical experimentation—would be historic.

Lula's inner circle counters the pessimistic view of what is possible by pointing to the process that brought Lula to the presidency. The Brazilian left, said Frei Betto sardonically, did not have a "metaphysical crisis" of the sort the "academic left" did with the crumbling of the Berlin wall, because it had never lost touch with the popular movement. Davos also emitted a broad signal that the First World is moderately nervous about its own moral authority. ("Building Trust" was the theme of the $22,000-a-head Swiss confab, implying clearly enough that there isn't an overly generous supply of that in the post-Enron environment.) Although it may be a stretch to say that the Washington Consensus on free-market liberalization and monetary orthodoxy has been "defeated," as Lula's chief of staff Dirceu proclaims, some tentative struggle with the straitjacket of dogma is undoubtedly taking place. Unnoticed in much of the commentary about Lula's rise, for example, is the simple fact that his inauguration marked the first normal transfer of power between elected presidents in Brazil in forty years.

Negotiations, several PT spokespeople implied, are the way to go forward, both domestically and internationally; and Brazilians are famously skilled diplomats. Lula, who gained negotiating experience as a union leader under military rule, has said his government's approach will be both tough and loyal: Agreements will be respected but Brazil will not buckle to unfavorable demands. "We will say yes to some things, no to others," said PT chief

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Genoino. "We will not just denounce, nor just accept; we will get them to change." Just how the coming negotiations over free trade between Washington and Brazil play out could greatly influence the course of overall hemispheric relations. If Brazil holds fast and wins tangible concessions from the United States or if it ultimately refuses to sign the FTAA, Lula will emerge as a key regional leader and US hegemony will be weakened, if not directly challenged.

But, to quote the cliché, four years is an eternity in politics, and reality can intervene in many ways to alter US-Brazilian relations during Lula's tenure, starting with war in Iraq. Some have argued that US preoccupation with Iraq has distracted Washington from taking a harder line against Lula. The Brazilians, for their part, are unlikely to consume scarce political capital fighting Washington over issues not directly related to Brazil.

Yet Lula has consistently criticized Washington's war plans and is likely to be an even more vocal opponent once the bombs start falling. Such a war could be economically devastating to Brazil and to Lula's social plans. Former labor federation official Jakobsen notes that "war in Iraq could raise oil prices. And Brazil imports oil. You can imagine the rest."

In the meantime, Brazil's new leftist government is forgoing all ritual denunciations of "imperialism," eschewing the Sandinista tack of declaring the "yanquis" the "enemy of humanity," and staying away from the rhetorical rants of Venezuela's Chávez. Instead, its response to Washington on all matters is: Let's talk. Filtering through these constant references is the suggestion that President Lula can turn his subjective resources into real facts, including, if need be, direct appeals to the conscience of the world, as he did at Davos.

There is an important precedent for this approach: Brazil faced down and defeated the powerful pharmaceutical multinationals in defending its patent-free generic AIDS drugs; its tactics included confrontational full-page ads in the *New York Times*. The strategy: Set the stage by building a convincing and respected national program, show it to the world and then go out and kick butt. The message was so simple and compelling—sick people dying of AIDS while drugs are denied them—that Big Pharma was disarmed. Even the notoriously impervious World Trade Organization had to cave briefly; at its 2001 meeting in Doha, Qatar, the WTO exempted some drug patents from its intellectual property protections, a concession the United States is now scrambling to take back. George W. Bush even tried to climb aboard in a way, with his mawkish State of the Union announcement of concern for AIDS-beleaguered African states.

Doing the same for the hungry and malnourished now at the center of Lula's social program won't be as easy. Frei Betto said that during a visit to Santa Monica, California, he found dozens of AIDS groups in the phone directory but none dealing with hunger. "AIDS can affect anybody," he explained, "so everybody feels sympathy. But hunger is only a problem for the poor." Nevertheless, he continued, slavery was once normal too; now, it's a crime. The same thing can happen with hunger, even poverty itself. It's certainly a long shot, but if anyone can pull this off, a soft-spoken, 57-year-old former lathe operator who never finished high school might just be the guy to do it. ■

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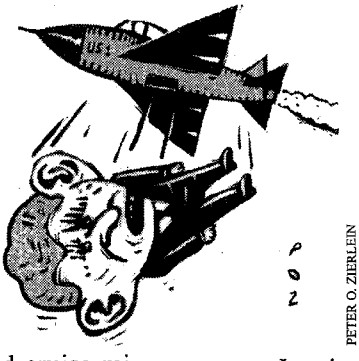
Confronting Empire

Following is an excerpt from Arundhati Roy's talk at the closing rally of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, on January 27. The full text will appear in her book War Talk, *to be published in April by South End Press.* —*The Editors*

So how do we resist "Empire"? The good news is that we're not doing too badly. There have been major victories. Here in Latin America you have had so many—in Bolivia, you have Cochabamba. In Peru, there was the uprising in Arequipa. In Venezuela, President Hugo Chávez is holding on, despite the US government's best efforts. And the world's gaze is on the people of Argentina, who are trying to refashion a country from the ashes of the havoc wrought by the IMF.

In India the movement against corporate globalization is gathering momentum and is poised to become the only real political force to counter religious fascism. As for corporate globalization's glittering ambassadors—Enron, Bechtel, WorldCom, Arthur Andersen—where were they last year, and where are they now? And of course here in Brazil we must ask, Who was the president last year, and Who is it now?



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Still, many of us have dark moments of hopelessness and despair. We know that under the spreading canopy of the War Against Terrorism, the men in suits are hard at work. While bombs rain down on us, and cruise missiles skid across the skies, we know that contracts are being signed, patents are being registered, oil pipelines are being laid, natural resources are being plundered, water is being privatized and George Bush is planning to go to war against Iraq.

If we look at this conflict as a straightforward eyeball to eyeball confrontation between Empire and those of us who are resisting it, it might seem that we are losing. But there is another way of looking at it. We, all of us gathered here, have, each in our own way, laid siege to Empire. We may not have stopped it in its tracks—yet—but we have stripped it down. We have made it drop its mask. We have forced it into the open. It now stands before us on the world's stage in all its brutish, iniquitous nakedness.

Empire may well go to war, but it's out in the open now—too ugly to behold its own reflection. Too ugly even to rally its own people. It won't be long before the majority of American people become our allies. In Washington this January, a quarter of a million people marched against the war on Iraq. Each month the protest is gathering momentum.

Before September 11, 2001, America had a secret history. Secret especially from its own people. But now America's secrets are history, and its history is public knowledge. It's street talk. Today, we know that every argument that is being used to escalate the war against Iraq is a lie—the most ludicrous of them being the US government's deep commitment to bring democracy to Iraq. Killing people to save them from dictatorship or ideological corruption is, of course, an old US government sport. Here in Latin America, you know that better than most.

Nobody doubts that Saddam Hussein is a ruthless dictator, a murderer (whose worst excesses were supported by the governments of the United States and Britain). There's no doubt that Iraqis would be better off without him. But then, the whole world would be better off without a certain Mr. Bush. In fact, he is far more dangerous than Saddam Hussein. So, should we bomb Bush out of the White House?

It's more than clear that Bush is determined to go to war against Iraq, regardless of the facts—and regardless of international public opinion. In its recruitment drive for allies, the United States is prepared to invent facts. The charade with weapons inspectors is the US government's offensive, insulting concession to some twisted form of international etiquette. It's like leaving the "doggie door" open for last-minute "allies" or maybe the United Nations to crawl through. But for all intents and purposes, the New War against Iraq has begun.

What can we do? We can hone our memory, we can learn from our history. We can continue to build public opinion until it becomes a deafening roar. We can turn the war on Iraq into a fishbowl of the US government's excesses. We can expose George Bush and Tony Blair—and their allies—for the cowardly baby killers, water poisoners and pusillanimous long-distance bombers that they are. We can reinvent civil disobedience in a million different ways. In other words, we can come up with a million ways of becoming a collective pain in the ass. When George Bush says "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists," we can say "No thank you." We can let him know that the people of the world do not need to choose between a Malevolent Mickey Mouse and the Mad Mullahs.

Our strategy should be not only to confront empire but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness—and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe. The corporate revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling—their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability.

Remember this: We be many and they be few. They need us more than we need them.

Arundhati Roy lives in New Delhi. She is the author of Power Politics *and* The God of Small Things. *She is the recipient of the Lannan Foundation's 2002 Prize for Cultural Freedom.*

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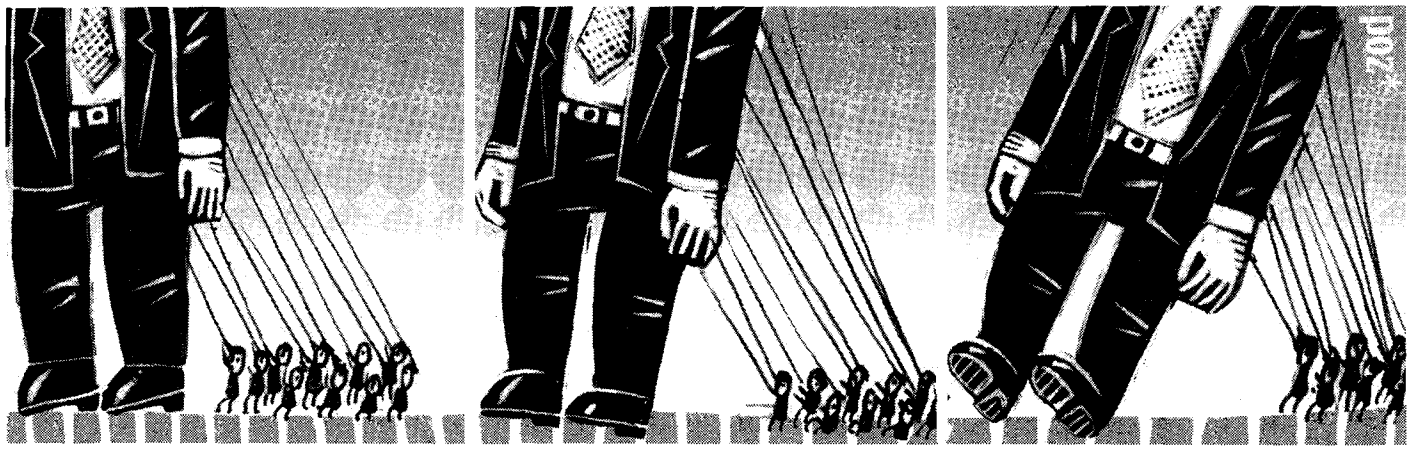
SPIRITS WERE HIGH AT THE THIRD WORLD SOCIAL FORUM IN BRAZIL, EVEN THOUGH WORKABLE PROPOSALS FOR A NEW GLOBAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM REMAINED ELUSIVE.



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Optimism and Antiwar Fervor: A Report From Porto Alegre

MARC COOPER

At roughly the same hour on January 27 that Hans Blix was handing over his weapons inspection report to the United Nations, something like 15,000 people braved the stifling Southern Hemisphere summer heat here to pack the local Gigantinho indoor stadium to the rafters. Unfurling a sea of flags and banners, the crowd sweatily engaged in what had to be one of the most high-spirited peace rallies in recent times—replete with a series of rolling, rollicking audience "waves" ordinarily seen only at sporting events.

Indian novelist Arundhati Roy and MIT Professor Noam Chomsky, sitting in front of a banner reading BUSH, POWELL, CHENEY = AXIS OF LIARS, further amped up the crowd with a back-to-back pair of incendiary speeches thrashing the Bush Administration and in particular its war buildup against Iraq. "The most powerful state in the world has announced its intentions to rule the world by force," Chomsky said. "And while this doctrine is not new, it has never before been expressed with such brazen arrogance." As night began to fall, the charged-up crowd poured out of the stadium and joined an equal number of demonstrators already waiting in the streets, and together they spent another two hours marching and protesting against the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas.

The double-header demonstration—against war and against corporate globalization—was a fitting finale to this year's World Social Forum. The WSF was established in this city three years ago primarily by French and Latin American activists to run concurrently with, and serve as a sort of "people's" alternative to, the elite World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland. While it's impossible to summarize this year's WSF, which drew more than 100,000 participants from dozens of countries and offered a kaleidoscopic array of 1,472 roundtables, lectures, seminars and workshops spread out among four venues over five days and nights, one firm conclusion is that the gathering accelerated and formalized the coupling of the emerging peace movement and the already established anti–corporate globalization movement. "This was imperative and natural," says João Pedro Stedile, a leader of Brazil's Landless Workers Movement and a member of the WSF organizing committee. "When capitalism enters into crisis it always recurs to war."

The dark clouds of conflict in Iraq shaded out any debate over the merger. Indeed, a number of key activists see the impending Bush Administration war with Iraq as a threat to much other crucial political work and therefore place a high priority on trying to stop it. "We have to be careful if there is war," said Malaysian economist Martin Khor of the Third World Network, one of the top strategists in the global justice movement. "So much energy would be lost in following the war and in resisting it. It could shift attention away from what is happening in the World Trade Organization, and then you will find that the United States and Europe will be able to bully other governments into agreeing on other issues."

Despite these very real worries, this year's WSF seemed to float on a cushion of optimistic ether. Participation was twice what it was last year and five or six times greater than when the WSF debuted, in 2001. The contrasting malaise at the corporatist Davos conference did not go unnoticed. (With CEOs doing public perp walks, the stock market still tanking and the US economy still stalled, it was no accident that the theme of this year's Davos gathering was "trust.") Just forty-eight hours after Brazil's newly inaugurated socialist President Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva gave an emotional address to tens of thousands here,

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he flew to Davos and brought the same plea for the poor directly to the world economic elite. "We started off as the anti-Davos," said a beaming Candido Grzybowski of the WSF organizing committee. "And now, three years later, Davos has had to become the anti–World Social Forum."

Further, there was a palpable sense that—at least in this hemisphere—some sort of tectonic shift was under way and that the free-market orthodoxy of the past two decades was crumbling. The proof was all around: the collapse of the Argentine neoliberal economic model, the fall of Peru's Alberto Fujimori, the problematic but populist President Chávez in Venezuela, the rise of a formidable political left in Bolivia, the election of a reformist president in Ecuador and, last but not least, the earthshaking political events here in Brazil. Lula's landslide election in this, Latin America's biggest country and the world's ninth-biggest economy, could only be taken as very, very good news for a movement searching for alternatives to corporate globalization. "The Washington Consensus has been defeated," says José Dirceu, Lula's chief of staff, referring to this new trend in continental politics. "It has been defeated because it has lost its legitimacy."

'We can't turn back the wheel of history. But we can turn it a different way.'
—José Dirceu, Lula's chief of staff

Against this backdrop, delegates and participants dived into debates and discussions organized into five major areas: democratic and sustainable development; human rights, diversity and equality; media and culture; political power and civil society; and war, peace and the world democratic order. But the central debate could be boiled down to one question: To what degree should social movements confront or withdraw from the current global financial, trade and political structures, and to what degree should they engage and try to reform them?

That is a big question, said French academic and author Patrick Viveret, because we are currently confronted "not with just a crisis of capitalism, but a crisis of civilization." One of the more extreme views came from Ugandan economist Yashpal Tandon, who argued in one of the better-attended strategy debates that the world's leading financial institutions, like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, are so hopelessly in the grip of what he called the "American-Anglo…Bush-Blair empire" that it is futile to attempt reform. "The only viable strategy, at least for a place like Africa," he said, "is to disassociate ourselves from them, withdraw from them." Tandon was vigorously rebutted by Lula adviser Dirceu, who seemed to voice the prevailing sentiment by arguing that it is impossible to reverse or ignore the forces of globalization. Rather, he said, they should be reshaped. "We can't turn back the wheel of history," Dirceu added. "But we can turn it a different way." In proposing what might be called the left wing of the possible, Dirceu outlined a vision in which countries like Brazil could lead strong regional blocks within the globalized economy, fighting for more equitable rules and relationships.

Just exactly "who rules and under what rules our world is ruled," says Lori Wallach of Public Citizen, is precisely what is at stake in the two most important proposals for mobilization and action to come out of this year's World Social Forum. This coming September, Cancún, Mexico, will be the site of the next ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization, and two months later Miami will host the ministerial confab on implementation of the Bush Administration's proposed hemispheric-wide trade pact, the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Both meetings are being targeted by global justice campaigners as venues for Seattle-like demonstrations—and more.

The WTO is currently considering three initiatives that would further bolster the strength of multinational corporations and further skew global trading power in favor of the rich Northern countries. The new agreements would focus on agriculture, services and local industries. The FTAA—at least as currently conceived—would also open up weaker Latin American economies to absorption by the multinationals. Meanwhile, boosted by the new Brazilian government's stated intention to resist the current shape of the FTAA, activists are hoping to crank up opposition to the agreement in Mexico and in the United States itself. "It's on issues like this that the World Social Forum is most useful," says Wallach. "Not because of the public debates. They're OK. But more important is the ability to spend three or four long days huddled together with allies and partners from around the world, allowing us time to do some real planning, real strategizing, real movement building."

Some of this year's strategizing also involved the building of strong national movements in key countries like India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Canada and Brazil in an attempt to strengthen the negotiating resolve of the global South. Dozens of groups and movements folded into the Our World is Not for Sale Network will lobby trade delegations in Geneva between now and the September Cancún ministerial meeting to oppose the expansion of the WTO and implementation of the FTAA. Brazil's new government could be a key player in the battles along the road to Cancún and Miami, perhaps assuming the role of spokesman for the poorer countries. "Brazil is it when it comes to the FTAA," Wallach says. "It has the economic power, the president and the social movement needed to wage the fight." The Brazilian position is clear: Lula will be happy to negotiate the FTAA with the United States, but will not sign it unless it is altered to make terms more favorable to Brazil and the rest of Latin America.

Just how successful the fights around Cancún and Miami will be later this year depends to a significant degree on the state of the movement in the United States. One hopeful sign is the swollen size of this year's US delegation: Last year it was about 450; this year it was three times bigger. Lots of antiwar activists made the trek, as did leftist thinkers from Chomsky to author Barbara Ehrenreich. The Washington, DC–based 50 Years Is Enough network, along with Jobs With Justice, helped bring down a hundred grassroots American activists, especially young trade unionists. "We tried hard to bring in a lot of people this year from places like Kentucky and Tennessee," said Soren Ambrose from 50 Years, here for the third year.

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Also present for the second year in a row was the AFL-CIO, represented by executive vice president Linda Chavez-Thompson. Federation leader John Sweeney was on the agenda but never made it. His substitute, Stanley Gacek, was an instant star, however. An assistant director of the AFL's international department, Gacek, speaking in near-perfect Portuguese, brought rousing cheers from his audience as he blasted the FTAA, praised Lula, promised that US labor would fight protectionism in all new trade agreements and vowed, in the name of the federation, "a full mobilization against George W. Bush." You knew you weren't listening to your father's AFL-CIO when Gacek ended his speech by quoting from the lyrics of the "Internationale." "We will be all," he said. "We will be all only with international solidarity."

In describing the goals of the World Social Forum, Ignacio Ramonet, one of its chief organizers and director of *Le Monde diplomatique*, says they have "shifted from protesting to proposing." The mission of the first and second forums, he said, "was to expose the vampires of Davos and their system to sunlight." Now, he said, it is time to move to the next phase, "to not just be against, but to be in favor of something." What that something is, frankly, remains quite elusive. While great lip service was paid to the notion of a substantive proposal, there was far too little of it, apart from the well-defined ongoing campaigns against the WTO and FTAA. Instead, there was a surfeit of denunciation, an excess of outrage and a constant shortage of remedies. One set of roundtables organized by Americans, for example, was billed as "Life After Capitalism" but dealt neither with the New Society nor with how you get there, instead remaining rutted in decrying the present.

As one remedy, forum organizers are moving next year's gathering to India (though WSF 2005 will come back to Porto Alegre). The move to Asia, to the "deeper" Third World, some argue, will broaden both the participation and the focus. But others worry that by moving it out of Brazil—even for a year—it will become untethered from real-world politics and degenerate into a sectarian debating society. These critics argue that the strong influence that the pragmatic and now victorious Brazilian Workers' Party exercises over the Porto Alegre conferences provides much-needed ballast.

The lack of proposals and solutions is nobody's fault in particular, but more a product of our times. The evaporation of the cold war, the collapse of the Stalinist universe, the fading of European social democracy and the inability of neoliberal capitalism to provide growth and overcome poverty tell us that another world is not only possible but imperative; we just don't know yet what it looks like. "The answer resides in socialism," says liberation theologian Frei Betto, a close Lula adviser. "Not the socialism of the Berlin wall, but socialism in the sense of putting everything social over everything economic." ■

PRE-EMPTIVE WAR FLAGRANTLY CONTRADICTS THE UN'S LEGAL FRAMEWORK.

Why International Law Matters

RICHARD FALK

There is little doubt that the White House seems resolved to wage war against Iraq, however weak its legal case, and despite the dramatic erosion of support even at home. It is probably late in the day to stop this militarist juggernaut, but it is not too late to try. There are several constructive steps that could still be taken. The UN General Assembly, relying on its residual authority to uphold world peace, could by resolution convene an emergency session to oppose recourse to war against Iraq, as well as to reaffirm the Charter rules governing the use of force. It would also be significant if members of Congress opposed to the war could persuade their colleagues to take up their proposals to reconsider Congress's premature authorization of the use of force by the President, thereby finally fulfilling their constitutional responsibilities.

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Beyond backing such institutional steps, the expanding peace movement should continue to hold demonstrations in which speakers develop the argument against war, including its international law elements. It would also be helpful to convene a panel of moral authority figures and jurists to issue a report or white paper on the relevance of international law and the just-war doctrine to the realities of the twenty-first century. As citizens, we have the opportunity and responsibility to act as if it is our duty to challenge this illegal and dangerous war fever that grips the leadership of this country. International law remains the best guide we have for drawing a line between acceptable and unacceptable behavior in world politics, especially in the war/peace setting. The rest of the world, as well as the American people, deserve a US government that respects this dividing line. It is regrettable but true that such respect will be forthcoming only if the grassroots pressure from here and abroad grows strong enough. Our government shows no signs of being guided in its foreign policy by any authority other than its own imperial dreams.

Among the more serious losses resulting from the September 11 attacks has been the subversion of international law as a source of guidance and limitation in the foreign policy of leading sovereign states, and especially the United States. Of course, this process of erosion preceded the attacks, and even started well

Richard Falk, a visiting professor at the University of California, is the author of The Great Terror War *(Olive Branch).*

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before George W. Bush's arrival in Washington. The Gulf War was fought with only a pro forma mandate from the UN Security Council, with operational control of the ends and means of the war being run from the White House and Pentagon. The Clinton Administration, prior to the 1999 NATO war over Kosovo, rejected peaceful settlement options and bypassed the UN on its way to war. But the presidency of George W. Bush has greatly accelerated this process. Its arrogant repudiation of such vital international agreements as the ABM Treaty and the Kyoto Protocol are indicative of this repudiation.

What September 11 did was to extend this dangerous form of American lawlessness to the most sensitive area of all—war-making, the use of force in disregard of sovereign rights and intervention in the internal affairs of foreign countries. Such a pattern of irresponsible and, in the end, self-destructive behavior by the US government is especially unfortunate, because the unprecedented Al Qaeda challenge did require adjustments in the way in which the international rules governing the use of force are applied. International law has evolved throughout modern times to meet the common goals of sovereign states seeking to protect their vital interests in the face of changing circumstances. World War II ended with the historic understanding that recourse to war between states could no longer be treated as a matter of national discretion, but must be regulated to the extent possible through rules administered by international institutions. The basic legal framework was embodied in the UN Charter, a multilateral treaty largely crafted by American diplomats and legal advisers. Its essential feature was to entrust the Security Council with administering a prohibition of recourse to international force (Article 2, Section 4) by states except in circumstances of self-defense, which itself was restricted to responses to a prior "armed attack" (Article 51), and only then until the Security Council had the chance to review the claim.

Imagine establishing a precedent that might be invoked by China to attack Taiwan, or dozens of other farfetched pre-emptive claims.

It is true that over the decades international lawyers have argued about the interpretation of these basic rules of restraint, but the Charter guidelines have generally been well enough understood to enable a clear line to be drawn between permissible and impermissible uses of force in most circumstances. A measure of flexibility existed, giving the UN legal authority to authorize nondefensive uses of force so as to uphold global peace and security; and, some would add, in light of recent practice, to protect vulnerable populations from severe abuses of human rights, especially ethnic cleansing and genocide.

There is no doubt that events since the end of the cold war have strained this earlier consensus. In the 1990s a series of conflicts that were internal to states, yet posed humanitarian crises due to ethnic cleansing (Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo) or breakdowns of governance (Somalia and several sub-Saharan states), created degrees of support for what came to be called "humanitarian intervention." When the United States led the NATO coalition in 1999 to avert ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, a controversial precedent was set for the use of nondefensive force without a mandate from the UN Security Council. The September 11 attacks challenge the viability of the overall framework of international law: a borderless war in which neither main adversary is a state. On one side is a concealed terrorist network with a hidden presence in sixty or more countries, and, on the other, a global state with a worldwide naval presence, military bases in dozens of countries and plans for the militarization of space.

What should "self-defense" mean in such an inflamed setting that lacks geographic parameters? The basic Charter idea was to regulate the use of force in relations among sovereign states. As such, with a bit of stretching, international law could be responsibly interpreted as justifying recourse to a defensive war directed at Afghanistan. Even this was a stretch because the Taliban regime was not directly implicated in the attacks, and it was not given an opportunity to hand over the Al Qaeda leadership or to cooperate with the United States in securing Afghan territory from being used in the future as a major terrorist base area. Still, it should be said in support of the war against Afghanistan that the Taliban government was recognized by only three governments (and two of these quickly broke diplomatic relations immediately after September 11, leaving only Pakistan, which joined the war on the US side), possessed an abysmal human rights record and was beset by both a civil war and an imminent threat of mass famine that it lacked the will and competence to avert.

Under these circumstances, the US war against Afghanistan, although remaining controversial in some antiwar circles, was widely accepted within the UN and by most governments as a reasonable extension of the legal right of self-defense. After all, the country seemed to be the nerve center of Al Qaeda and to contain its most notable leaders. There was a sense of urgency given the magnitude of the harm inflicted by the September 11 attacks, and strong indications that additional attacks were planned. It was under these circumstances reasonable for the Bush leadership to believe that dislodging the Taliban and destroying the Al Qaeda presence in Afghanistan were the most relevant first steps in defending the country against such an enemy. It was a reasonable response, but not necessarily an effective one, especially given the manner in which the military campaign was carried forward. In retrospect, it seems clear that Pentagon tactics included an excessive reliance on air power and on Afghan ground forces that harmed many civilians and thus diminished many of the expected benefits of striking Al Qaeda headquarters. Furthermore, the halfhearted postwar occupation and reconstruction efforts led by the United States are raising doubts about the durability of the "victory" over the Taliban.

But the move from Afghanistan to the second phase of American response, directed at the "axis of evil" countries, is imprudent on strategic grounds and also needlessly destructive of international law. President Bush's claim of a generalized right to wage pre-emptive war is in flagrant contradiction with the Charter's legal framework and lacks any special circumstances justifying an exception. To apply that claim to Iraq, given the absence of any credible evidence of an imminent threat, is to carry American unilateralism to the frightening extreme of claiming an extraordinarily dangerous and perverse right of "preventive

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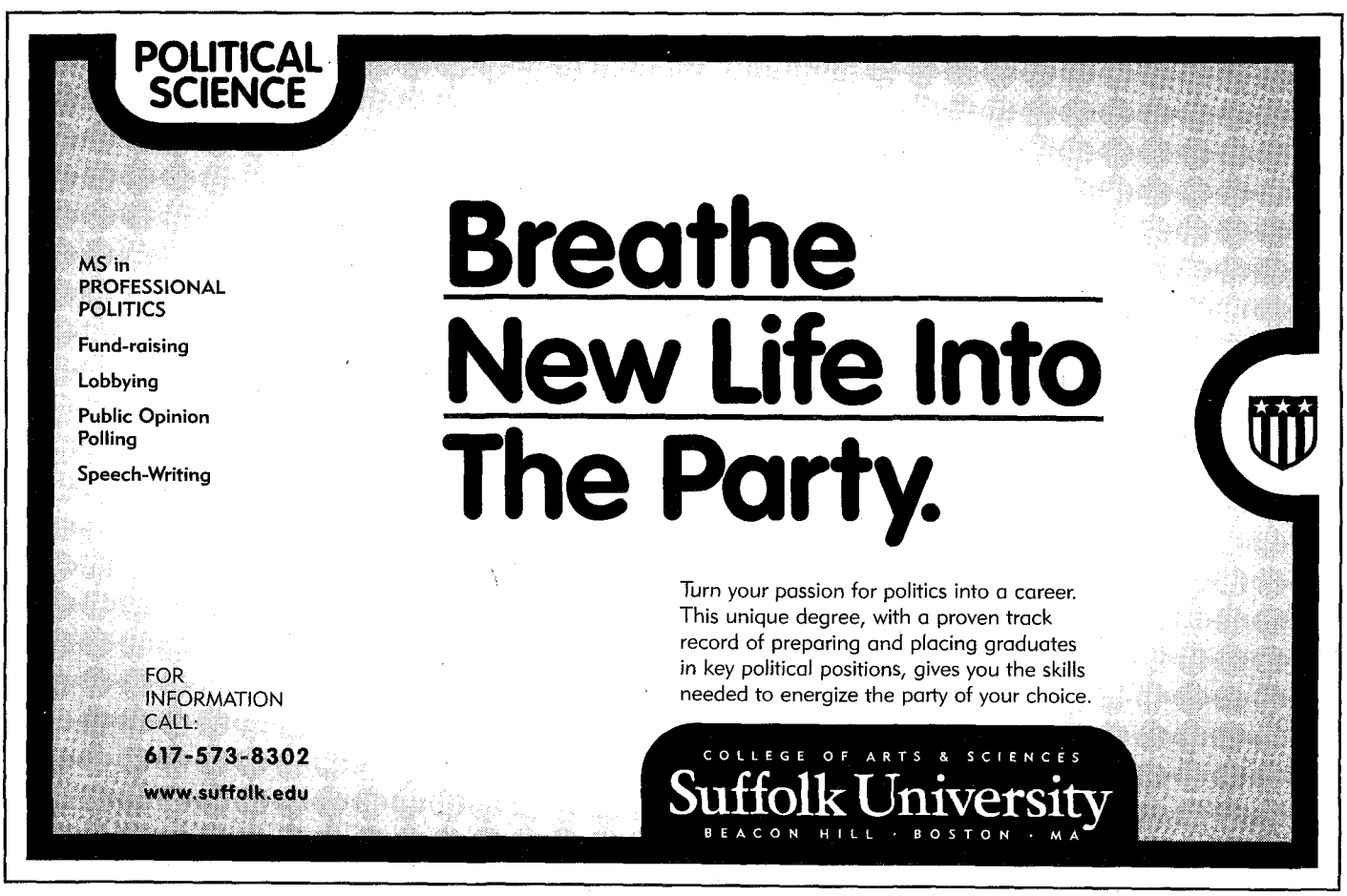
war" (that is, lacking the elements of necessity and imminence). Even here the question "prevent what?" cries for an answer, given the absence of a plausible Iraqi threat in the foreseeable future and the razor-sharp containment policy poised to annihilate Iraq in the event of a Baghdad provocation. Imagine establishing a precedent that might be invoked by China to attack Taiwan pre-emptively, or India in relation to Kashmir, or dozens of other farfetched pre-emptive claims, resulting in an upsurge of dangerous warfare.

Lest one be distracted by the performance of Secretary of State Colin Powell at the UN, we should recall that the initial Bush formulations of the pre-emption doctrine made no mention of the UN and only a pro forma reference to Congress. The preferred Bush option was pure presidential unilateralism. It was only when Republican Party heavyweights (Scowcroft, Baker, Kissinger) publicly warned the White House that there was insufficient backing for the war that Bush was persuaded that he needed to build more national and international support.

In response, Bush shifted course, acknowledged a role for Congressional authorization and sought a UN mandate—although war had already been decided upon. What has been alarming is that Congress, apparently intimidated by Bush's lingering popularity, and the Security Council, seemingly preferring its role as rubber stamp to that of being again (as in Kosovo) bypassed, went along as sheep to the slaughter. In the process, the UN ignored its own Charter and embraced the pseudo-legalism of enforcing the punitive 1991 ceasefire resolutions imposed on a defeated Iraq after the Gulf War, thus leading to the current inspection regime. The Bush Administration has indicated all along that it would greet a UN inspection report favorable to Iraq with a spirit of defiance, further undermining respect for international law and UN procedures, and would return to its original impulse to embark on war without prior UN approval. It has distorted Hans Blix's and Mohamed ElBaradei's balanced reporting, highlighting only their criticism and suppressing via its full-court media press their favorable comments on extensive and expanding Iraqi cooperation in providing access and requested information. If eliminating the Iraqi WMD threat is Washington's true motive for war, then only a fool would abandon the inspection process for war at this point!

When September 11 occurred it was obvious to me and others that this new struggle would exert pressure on the capacity of international law to provide acceptable limits on the way in which the United States pursued security in the world. For this reason, it seemed to make sense to give renewed attention to the just-war doctrine as a way of acknowledging and identifying limits on recourse to force, yet loosening the restraints of legal rules that had been crafted to minimize warfare between territorial states. What can be done in relation to a concealed terrorist network needed to be different, including the authorization under exceptional circumstances of extended notions of self-defense to deal selectively in an anticipatory manner with threats from abroad that are severe and immediate. At the same time, it was clear there was no basis for abandoning international law or undermining UN authority when dealing with conflicts between territorial states, where they continue to serve the world well. The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claimed right of pre-emption against Iraq, given the realities of its capabilities and probable intentions, seemed best understood as recourse to "aggressive war" by the United States. To redefine the issue of US aggressiveness toward Iraq as the enforcement of UN Security Council resolutions or as a disarmament measure is to trample on the sovereign rights of Iraq and to subject its long-suffering population to the scourge of a one-sided war. To argue that the legal basis of the war is to unseat Iraq's brutal ruler—a claim of humanitarian intervention—is so far from the real US motivations for the war as to be manifestly hypocritical, although this did not stop the President from building part of his case for war in the recent State of the Union address on graphic details of Saddam Hussein's cruel abuses toward the Iraqi people.

Even aside from the Iraq debate, the issues at stake are fundamental. Part of the difficulty is that the debate about the relevance of international law has been mainly between advocates of polar positions, both of which miss the point. There are the realists, perhaps best represented by Michael Glennon, who argue that states no longer respect the UN framework of restraint, that the nature of international conflict has fundamentally changed and that we might as well acknowledge the collapse of the international law enterprise in war/peace settings. And then there are the legalists, who insist that nothing has changed, and that a literal reading of the Charter restraints deserves unconditional respect regardless of the gravity, the apocalyptic worldview and the non-territorial character of the mega-terrorist security threats.

A more useful approach to international law, although admittedly more complicated, and dependent on the messier dynamics of judgment and interpretation, is to reaffirm the persisting vitality of the Charter approach but to acknowledge that the nature of global terrorism makes certain extensions of the doctrine of self-defense justifiable in exceptional circumstances. Referring back to the argument made above, there are grounds for loosening the restraints in relation to Al Qaeda, but not with respect to Iraq. September 11 provides no persuasive grounds for departing from the prohibition upon the use of aggressive force in relation to Iraq or other conflicts between sovereign states. At most, such force could be authorized by an explicit decision of the UN Security Council, but such authorization would itself be dubious in this instance, violating the letter and spirit of the Charter. It needs to be recalled and confirmed anew that the primary mission of the UN is war prevention.

There remains the possibility that America's diplomatic muscle will intimidate the Security Council into ignoring its constitutional responsibilities under the Charter, and either mandate an unwarranted war or refuse to place obstacles in the way of Washington's stated intentions. Such a posture would weaken the credibility of the UN as representing the best interests of the peoples of the world on matters of peace and security, and would further undermine the role of international law. Not only the peace of the world but the vitality of our democracy is in acute danger if the US government continues down this path of lawlessness. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
don't think Davis has anything to worry about on that score.

As for compromising or jeopardizing his sources, that's a risk journalists take every day when they decide to publish a story. It can't be used as a permanent excuse for sitting on information that's vital to the public, and in this case to the possible administration of justice and to history itself. DAVID HOLMBERG

HOMELAND FASCISM

New York City

■ Re Alexander Cockburn's "The Right Not to Be in Pain" ["Beat the Devil," Feb. 3]: Since the Supreme Court installed George W. Bush in the White House, I've watched with increasing horror and despair as my city was bombed, my retirement savings went up in smoke and my health insurance premiums doubled. I believe that Bush was directly, or at best indirectly, responsible for all these events. A more intelligent President, a President more engaged with the day-to-day workings of government, a President whose bellicose policies did not infuriate the rest of the world, might have prevented 9/11. A President who had any idea of what it's like to struggle to earn a living might recognize that basic healthcare should not be a luxury reserved for the wealthy. Until now, I've done nothing about any of this because I believed there was nothing I could do. I chose to wait it out, to remind myself that if I'd survived Nixon, Reagan and the first Bush, then I'd (mostly likely) survive the second Bush.

A year ago, I received one more reminder that my government has essentially targeted my way of life for attack: My publisher, Ed Rosenthal of Quick American Archives, was arrested on federal drug charges for supplying people with medical marijuana in California, a state where medical marijuana is legal.

Rosenthal was recently tried and found guilty. When the jurors found out after the trial that he was authorized by the City of Oakland to grow medical marijuana and was not a common drug dealer, as the prosecution portrayed him, they apologized to Rosenthal. (The defense was not allowed to mention medical marijuana at the trial.) He is out on bail (despite the prosecution's objections) and awaits sentencing in June. The judge in the case, Charles Breyer, is the brother of Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer. Rosenthal faces five years to life in prison. I've just met with him in Oakland, and he's in good spirits and believes he will win on appeal.

At a time when there isn't enough money to provide sufficient security against future terrorist attacks (to cite one egregious example), for the government to be using any of its resources to prosecute a man who has dedicated his life to helping people in pain defines obscenity. I am now doing the only thing I can think of: I'm speaking out publicly against the Bush Administration. The prosecution of Ed Rosenthal is one more atrocity in a litany of major and minor atrocities committed by Bush as he leads the world toward ruin and degradation. We must find a way to stop him. ROBERT ROSEN

Columbus, Ohio

■ Alexander Cockburn has a valid argument for the legalization of medical marijuana. In conjunction, I offer a quote from Ralph Nader's book *Crashing the Party*: "When the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937 was passed, industrial hemp fell into the category of a similar prohibited product. It helped that the paper industry wanted this to happen because industrial hemp producers would be an undesirable competition." No doubt the beer, wine and liquor industries hold a similar attitude toward Mary Jane smoking, hence the fierce paranoid opposition to anything approaching social approval of cannabis. So industrial hemp is the victim of misdirected prejudice, and our farmers are deprived of growing a crop that we import from other countries. Just one more instance of the plutocracy's ineptness. DICK WALTMIRE

CORRECTION

■ In Jonathan Schell's story last week, Britain and Italy were left out of the list of countries that signed a letter of thanks to the United States.

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 6)

not just a question of money. We want recognition—something other than Black History Month." Diane Sammons, a lawyer for the plaintiffs who specializes in human rights law, called the court action "the beginning of a process that will probably wind up in the Supreme Court and which eventually could be as significant for African-Americans as *Brown v. Board of Education*."

The federal class-action lawsuits—the first three were filed about a year ago—are against companies on behalf of potentially all slave descendants. The attorneys are claiming "unjust enrichment" and a breach of human rights laws. They are not asking for payments to the plaintiffs. Instead they seek corporate accountability for profits made from slavery, unspecified damages and the establishment of a fund for the healthcare, housing, education and economic development needs of African-Americans. They also want a full investigation of the financial underpinnings of slavery. A principal motivation of the reparations campaign and of the lawsuits is the lingering sense that America has never fully examined the economic powers behind slavery.

On the other side of the lawsuits are seventeen powerful corporations. They include financial institutions such as JPMorgan Chase and FleetBoston; insurance companies (e.g., Aetna and New York Life); railroads (Norfolk Southern, Union Pacific and CSX); tobacco companies (R.J. Reynolds, Brown & Williamson); and a textile manufacturer (WestPoint Stevens). The lawsuits claim that predecessors of the financial institutions loaned money to slaveowners and handled the monetary transactions of slavery; that insurance companies insured slaves and slave ships; that railroads forced slaves to build and run rail lines (a railroad rulebook prescribes thirty-nine lashes for recalcitrant slaves); that tobacco companies used slave labor in the tobacco fields; and that textile companies profited from cotton cultivated by slaves and sold the coarse garments slaves were forced to wear.

The number of corporations that benefited from slavery and that could be sued may reach more than a hundred, according to Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, a lawyer who is a plaintiff and who almost single-handedly has uncovered the information linking corporations to slavery. "These companies have become multibillion-dollar interests in large part due to the practice of stealing people and stealing their labor," she said. "Justice requires that they atone for these wrongs by paying restitution." (Prior to her recent research, the reparations movement was focused almost solely on restitution by the government.) Additional corporations could include utility companies that used slaves to lay gas lines beneath Southern cities like New Orleans and mining companies that forced slaves to dig for coal, according to *USA Today* reporter James Cox, who has researched the subject extensively. Media companies like Gannett, Knight Ridder and the Tribune Company have been linked to slavery because their predecessors published ads for runaway slaves. Nor are universities exempt. Advocates are discussing whether schools including Harvard, Brown, Yale and the University of Virginia should be sued because many of their original benefactors were allegedly wealthy slaveowners.

Top Bush Administration officials might be asked to testify as the lawsuits progress. William Donaldson, the new head of the Securities and Exchange Commission, was CEO and chairman of defendant Aetna when the company issued a public apology for writing life insurance policies on the lives of slaves, and John Snow, the new Treasury Secretary, is the former chairman of defendant CSX.

Most of the corporations refused comment on the lawsuits. But their statements suggest a long legal battle. For instance, a spokesperson for JPMorgan Chase said that after the appearance of an earlier article [see Friedman, "Chase's Historical Ledger," October 9, 2000] his company undertook "an extensive review of its internal archives and public records with the help of an archival expert to look for any evidence or proof of the allegations. We found nothing to indicate any such transactions took place. Consequently, we feel the allegations are without merit." A Norfolk Southern Railway spokesman said: "We don't think it's right to use the courts 140 years after abolition to attribute the wrongs of slavery to modern day people and businesses. We will try to defend our employees, customers, and shareholders."

A Union Pacific spokesman said, "What happened 150 years ago under different social circumstances, morality, and law has no connection to today's Union Pacific." On the insurance front, "Our archival records show that our predecessor company, Nautilus Insurance Company, wrote policies on the lives of slaves in 1846 and 1847. The trustees of Nautilus properly voted to end the practice in 1848," said a spokesman for the New York Life Insurance Company. "We fully expect to prevail in the courts."

Two of the biggest legal hurdles faced by those arguing for reparations are whether the plaintiffs have the legal standing to sue and whether the statute of limitations has expired. They argue that the slave descendants have standing, that slavery, as a crime against humanity, has no statute of limitations and, in any case, that there are exceptions to the statute. Bolstering their contentions are Holocaust-related cases in which corporations contributed to reparations funds for Nazi-era slave labor. (One of the lawyers for the plaintiffs represented victims in some of those cases.)

The judge who will hear the consolidated cases is Charles Norgle Sr. of US District Court, Northern Illinois. Appointed by President Reagan, he is considered by Illinois civil rights attorneys to be one of the most conservative judges on the court.

While the federal lawsuits have moved forward, state and local initiatives have been passed, including a California law in 2000, sponsored by former State Senator Tom Hayden, that requires insurance companies to divulge information they have pertaining to slavery. Recently, a law passed by the Chicago City Council took effect requiring all companies that do business with the city to disclose involvement in or profits from slavery. "This is about setting American history straight," said Robin Brown, an aide to Alderman Dorothy Tillman, sponsor of the bill. "This country can't heal until it faces what it did to slaves and African-Americans."

The lawsuits that will be heard in Judge Norgle's court open a new chapter in African-American history. But whether they lead to corporate accountability, compensation and a thorough investigation of slavery may not be known until higher courts decide.

JOHN S. FRIEDMAN

John S. Friedman is a journalist and documentary filmmaker who has focused on the activities of corporations during the Nazi era.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

What's a Neoliberal to Do?

GREG GRANDIN

WORLD ON FIRE: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability.
By Amy Chua.
Doubleday. 256 pp. $26.

In the 1960s it seemed as if the Third World was in flames, fueled by anti-imperialist struggles from Cuba to Vietnam, Bolivia to Algeria. For New Left intellectuals and activists, these wars were not only the Achilles' heel of Western domination but also an answer to the alienation of modern life, a chance to forge a new humanism. To spark "two, three, many Vietnams" was a political tactic—and a Hegelian imperative. Taking up arms against the colonialists and their collaborators would make the subjugated aware of themselves as moral beings; revolutionary violence would lead not only to national but to human liberation. The historical mission of anticolonial movements, Frantz Fanon wrote at the dawn of that decade, must not be the substitution of "one barbarism" for "another barbarism," "one crushing of man" with "another crushing of man." Instead, it should free both the colonized and the colonizer, ushering in a society free of exploitation.

Four decades later, the Third World, according to the voluminous commentary since September 11, is still burning, yet the smoke carries whiffs not of emancipation but of degradation, not of redemption but of apocalypse. Today's opinion-makers do not look at Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America as the Enlightenment's proving ground. Instead, it is a shadowy world ruled by passions that call to be tamed. In the face of genocide, social rot, corruption and failed states, it is the West's mission, moral obligation even, to finish the task initiated by the old imperialism, a task that national liberation movements were not up to completing. "Empire," as Michael Ignatieff recently put it in his somewhat reluctant endorsement of war with Iraq, is now "the last hope for democracy and stability alike."

This gloom has not weakened the Washington Consensus, which holds that open markets combined with constitutional rule will produce a peaceful, prosperous world. But it has changed its tenor. Once preached with evangelical optimism by the Clinton White House, the idea of free-market democracy is now pure fire and brimstone, baldly linked to martial power. As the Bush Administration's 2002 National Security Strategy pre-emptively puts it, in case anyone begins to think differently, there is only one "single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise."

Doubt, however, is rising. In *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*, Amy Chua adds her voice to the dissenters, chief among them economist Joseph Stiglitz, who are questioning the sanity, not to mention morality, of free-market fundamentalism. Like Stiglitz, who worked for the World Bank and the Clinton Administration, Chua has an insider's authority. A Yale law professor who helped privatize Mexico's telecommunications industry, she confesses that "back in the early nineties, I believed that the proceeds of privatization" would go to roads, hospitals, schools and the poor. But confronted with evidence suggesting otherwise, she now agrees with a Mexican newspaper report that the "booty of privatization has made multimillionaires of 13 families, while the rest of the population—some 80 million Mexicans—has been subjected to the same gradual impoverishment as though they had suffered through a war."

Chua argues that free-market globalization merely inflames an existing atavistic rage, 'long suppressed ethnic hatreds.'

Judging from the deprivation, corruption and violence that Chua and others have

Greg Grandin, author of The Blood of Guatemala *(Duke), teaches Latin American history at New York University.*

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chronicled, that war has been as merciless and massive as any in human history. While globalization may have bolstered general economic indicators in many countries—wages up a few pennies a day, absolute poverty down—these advances are offset by the rise of basic food prices, the drowning of local industries in a flood of cheap imports, the whiplash caused by unregulated hot-money speculation and government cutbacks in education, welfare and healthcare. Chua vividly describes the anarchic, lawless quality of the first phase of privatization. Gangsters, oligarchs, dictators, international corporations and bureaucrats preside over a staggering upward transfer of wealth, one that arguably rivals the accumulation that took place during the heyday of industrialization and colonialism. Meanwhile, more than a billion people live on less than a dollar a day, and half the world's population survives on less than two.

Market democracy is not, according to Chua, a "universal prescription for the multiple ills of underdevelopment." Free trade, financial liberalization and privatization have concentrated enormous wealth in the hands of "market-dominant minorities"—the Chinese in Southeast Asia, whites in Latin America and Southern Africa, Jews in post-Communist Russia, Indians in Kenya, the Ibo in Nigeria and so on. These policies have also generated dislocation, insecurity, anger and destitution among indigenous majorities, who can now vote as a result of Washington's campaign to extend constitutional rule throughout the world.

The result, according to Chua, is invariably one of three backlashes:

§ against economic liberalization, whereby new voters elect populist governments promising to halt or reverse market reforms;

§ against democracy, whereby an imperiled, market-dominant minority blocks or limits majority will (Chua argued in a recent *New York Times* Op-Ed that this was what was occurring with Venezuela's elite-driven oil strike against Hugo Chávez);

§ and finally, against affluent ethnic minorities who are subjected to violent spasms of "ethnonationalist" rage stirred up by demagogic politicians, as happened during Indonesia's 1998 anti-Chinese rampage, Russia's anti-Semitic assaults and even the Rwandan and Yugoslav genocides.

Chua is right to underscore the extreme ethnic stratification of the world economy, which since at least the age of colonialism has been both experienced and administered along racial lines. Yet by placing so much explanatory weight on ethnic passions, she ducks a more thorough investigation into the mutually dependent relationship between neoliberalism and global violence.

World on Fire conjures the specter of race retribution everywhere. Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, who has garnered the world media's attention by inciting his supporters to seize white-owned plantations, seems to be a particular *bête noire*. Even South Africa fuels Chua's fear, for danger there, she says, lurks just below the surface of the African National Congress's anti-racialism. How does she know? Because a drunken ANC official once reportedly said that when "Mandela dies, we will kill you whites like flies."

Taking a page from an earlier generation of liberal cold war social scientists, who interpreted the Third World's social problems, including racism and violence, as obdurate remains of a primeval past—to be remedied with a healthy dose of Western modernity—Chua argues that free-market globalization merely inflames an already existing atavistic rage, a rage that springs from the "darkest recesses of history." The original problem is not capitalism—Chua repetitively chants that "on balance," liberalization is a good thing—but "long suppressed ethnic hatreds," which, with a more enlightened, guided application of market reform, can be tamed and defanged.

But is the world really singed by ethnic terror? Violence is executed on a daily basis, but not, as Chua describes, by resentful, dark-skinned masses against a well-heeled minority. Rather it is of the kind that does not grab the headlines. Untold numbers of peasants are driven off their land every year by cheap agricultural imports or by the extension of large-scale commercial crop production. Yet they merit little notice compared with the 3,000 white farmers terrorized by Mugabe. Crime, disease and malnutrition directly linked to neoliberal restructuring kill far more than the epic clash of civilizations now purportedly under way.

Moreover, as Ted Fishman reports in a recent issue of *Harper's*, the central axis of carnage outside the West is not racial hatred but property rights. In Burma, Sudan and Cambodia desperately poor soldiers armed with ever-more affordable weapons (four of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, led by the United States, account for 83 percent of global arms exports) fight for control of one or two commodities. In Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, competing factions sell diamonds, minerals and timber (or privatize whole industries) to international corporations or foreign governments; the proceeds make such conflicts not only profitable but interminable. War financing also comes from global capital markets. In Sudan, where the civil war has cost 2 million lives and has driven an equal number from their homes, US capital funds the European, Canadian and Asian oil interests, which in turn bankroll the Sudanese government's counterinsurgency. When Congress tried in 2001 to ban companies trading with Sudan from having access to US capital, the Bush Administration, encouraged by Wall Street, blocked the effort, arguing that US markets would lose out to Tokyo and London competitors. Meanwhile, financial deregulation has made it easy for blood money from wars, dictators and contraband—up to $1 trillion a year—to be miraculously transformed into respectable capital, with much of it entering the United States.

Instability is not just an unfortunate effect of liberalization but one of its constitutive elements. Rather than "aggravating" ancient hatreds, economic crisis *creates* ethnonationalist conflict. Until recently, for example, the Ivory Coast was renowned for open borders and prosperity made possible by cocoa export. Yet throughout the 1990s, international competition from new producers, which by all standards is a vital component of the new economic order, drove cocoa prices downward. With de-

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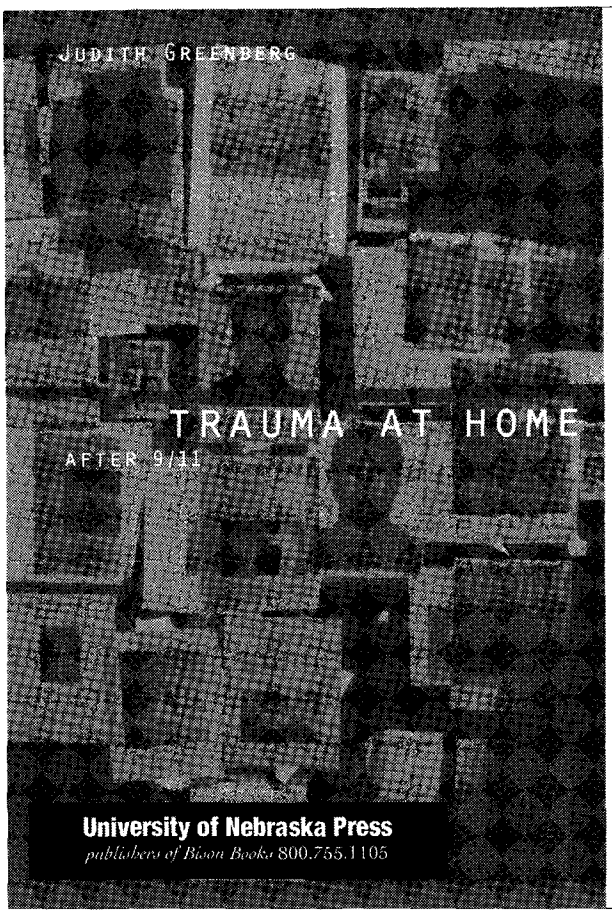
clining revenues and pressure from the World Bank, the state privatized the industry (much of it going to Archer Daniels Midland). Economic crisis bred political crisis, and today the nation is on the brink of violence that some say could match what occurred in Rwanda a decade ago. Yet the xenophobia peddled by the government is aimed not against a prosperous few, as Chua's analysis would suggest, but largely at migrant plantation workers from neighboring states.

As a reformer, Chua tentatively endorses an array of mechanisms—education, healthcare, redistributive tax policies, some form of affirmative action—that could mitigate the worst effects of "capitalism in the raw." But her need to find race blood everywhere prevents her from understanding the importance of political mobilization in bringing about such ameliorative measures.

Chua deploys such a spongy definition of ethnicity that it absorbs and wipes away complex histories of political struggles, commitments and protests. By describing the United States, for instance, as a global "market-dominant minority," she can characterize the nationalizations of its interests in Mexico, Argentina and Chile, along with similar expropriations throughout the Third World, as "ethnically targeted confiscations" driven by the "wild enthusiasm" of the "indigenous majority." Chua downplays the fact that the popular movements cheering these actions were as equally anti-imperialist and anticapitalist as they were nativist and nationalist; she gives no indication that nationalizations, some supported by the UN and, at times, even the United States, were often designed to bring about the kind of modern welfare state Chua claims to advocate (she also neglects to mention that government industrial expropriations were essential to the post–World War II reconstruction of Western Europe).

No justice is done to contemporary indigenous or African-American rights movements in Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, Venezuela or Brazil: Chua interprets them as embryonic pogroms and their leaders as charismatic demagogues. The racial dimensions of rule and resistance in Latin America are deep. Popular resentment and elite fear drive much of politics. Yet the continent's cultural rights activism emerges from and remains connected to a long tradition of humanist, egalitarian left politics. This mobilization makes up Latin America's loosely knit contribution to the worldwide movement—recently gathered at the World Social Forum in Brazil's Porto Alegre—demanding a more humane globalization. But Chua, who reassures us that she is no



Trauma at Home
After 9/11
Edited by Judith Greenberg

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"anti-globalist," dispatches such naïvetés early on. "Given the ethnic dynamics of the developing world," she writes, calls by the likes of Noam Chomsky for more democracy are "dangerous."

Chua is also blind to how the inequities of the world economy she so graphically captures are enforced by those who benefit the most from them. She describes it as "ironical" that the United States insists on open markets abroad while maintaining tariffs and subsidies at home. But she ignores how in many countries now under supposed free-market democratic reconstruction, the US-waged cold war was one sustained, massive assault on the very forces that were trying create a fairer society. To suggest that in its wake the United States is promoting some kind of unrestrained democracy is simply wrong. In Latin America, during the recent restoration of constitutional rule that followed prolonged dictatorships, the United States dissuaded political parties from mobilizing their supporters and encouraged them to adopt a more "modern" political style based on passive representation and elite negotiations. Likewise, Washington has crafted a number of antidemocratic measures—such as international treaties that limit the ability of local states to implement regulations, and the establishment of independent central banks that remove monetary policy from public debate—restricting popular will.

It is by now a left cliché to dismiss works such as Chua's as not seriously engaging with history or political economy, but the emptiness of *World on Fire* reveals contemporary liberalism's deeper bankruptcy. Chua offers her work as an incursion into public debates, positioning herself as a more sober Thomas Friedman, a less critical Joseph Stiglitz. She advises governments and businesses on the effects of globalization, and one easily sees her in the next Democratic administration. *World on Fire* evokes other well-timed interventions by liberal social scientists during moments of crisis, for instance, John Maynard Keynes's 1919 *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* and Walt Whitman Rostow's 1960 *Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Yet where such work called for robust responses to political problems—including an extension of democracy, social welfare and coherent, if problematic, development strategies—Chua offers bread and circuses.

World on Fire argues that the best antidote to poverty and violence "lies with market-dominant minorities themselves" who should "voluntarily take steps to foster the reality and the perception that they are vital, public-spirited contributors to the national interest." These should include not only increased US aid and individual and corporate philanthropy but the patronage of public spectacles. "Given the extraordinary needs and deficits of developing societies," she writes,

> the opportunities for building interethnic goodwill are plentiful, and there is considerable room for creativity. For example, many have observed the tremendous unifying power of sports all over the world, across both class and ethnic lines. In the United States, nothing has improved race relations more over the last two decades than the idolization of such figures as Michael Jordan, Sammy Sosa, and Tiger Woods.... In Indonesia, where anti-Chinese sentiment is about as fierce and entrenched as it can get, ordinary *pribumi* [indigenous] citizens openly adore Susi Susanit and Alan Kusuma, ethnic Chinese badminton stars.

What accounts for this pale liberalism, insipid in diagnosis and remedy? Part of the problem is the nature of the neoliberal economic regime itself, which, unlike Keynesianism, does not lend itself to coherent development strategies. But another reason is the defeat of alternatives, which were vanquished as part of that massive backlash against democracy, to use Chua's own phrasing, otherwise known as the cold war. Both Keynes and Rostow, for example, wrote in response to formidable political and theoretical challenges—working-class, Marxist, anti-imperialist—which forced them to add substance to their analysis. Without these pressures, the syncretic richness of liberalism, along with its ability to extend its protections, has been drained, leaving us in an impoverished landscape.

The contradiction between democracy and capitalism has been charted many times before. In 1944, for instance, Karl Polanyi argued in *The Great Transformation* that the central political conflict of capitalism was between ideologues pushing utopian visions of unfettered markets to the brink of catastrophe and social movements demanding more government intervention, regulation and redistribution. Today, those countervailing forces lack sufficient traction to counterthrust and, if *World on Fire* is any indication, little theoretical reinforcement from their would-be intellectual allies. In the midst of an economic crisis caused by intense speculation and unparalleled accumulation, we reward the rich with tax breaks and punish the poor with social-service cutbacks. After a decade of dislocation caused by privatization and financial liberalization, we have a foreign policy insisting on more of the same.

Along with neoliberalism, we have a neo–civilizing mission. The West will deliver free-market democracy, one way or another, to the rest of the world, either through the proper mix of technology, markets, constitutions, consumer goods or out of the barrel of a smart weapon. Despite its warnings against a too-quick and potent injection of free-market democracy, *World on Fire*, by obsessively focusing on "dark" ethnic hatreds, by ignoring the deeper links between capitalism and violence, by dismissing the importance of Third World democratic movements to the achievement of reform and by failing to provide a serious alternative to free-market fundamentalism, ultimately serves to legitimize the new imperial enterprise. Those market ideologues whom Polanyi warned us about are driving us beyond the precipice. But this time liberals such as Chua and Ignatieff are pointing the way.

Today, many dismiss New Left intellectuals and activists for their uncritical celebration of national liberation movements and their dangerous sympathy for revolutionary violence, an opinion confirmed by the uninspiring reality of states like Zimbabwe, Cuba, Iraq and Algeria. Yet no matter how defeated their optimism, they taught us that the world was connected, that the cruelty that afflicts much of the globe is not a residue from some premodern past but a dynamic condition of the present. The New Left offered a notion of progress based not on technology diffusion, commerce and consumerism but on equality and justice, and a belief that the achievement of a just world was a political, not a managerial, problem—that it would take sustained struggle against entrenched national and international interests and privileges.

In his introduction to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote of a colonial system that produced and profited from inequality, slavery and racism. That system, though, held the "carrot" of the Enlightenment in front of the nose of the colonized as means of enticing them to "gallop" along. If, however, the Enlightenment were to be truly implemented, Sartre insisted, the colonized would have to destroy the very colonial order that sponsored it. Invoking the German philosopher who first described the relationship between slavery's abolition and the Enlightenment's fulfillment, he mordantly concluded, "colonial administrators are not paid to read Hegel." Neither, apparently, are Yale law professors. ■

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Poets Against the War

Here The Nation *presents a few of the works posted on "Poets Against the War," (poetsagainstthewar.org), the website set up by Sam Hamill, poet and editor, when he called for poems and statements against war in Iraq. At last count, there were 8,200 entries. Hamill's summons to poets followed Laura Bush's invitation to a symposium on American poetry at the White House, which was "postponed" when it was learned that antiwar poems were to be presented.*

Statement

It would not have been possible for me ever to trust someone who acquired office by the shameful means Mr. Bush and his abettors resorted to in the last presidential election. His nonentity was rapidly becoming more apparent than ever when the catastrophe of September 11, 2001, provided him and his handlers with a role for him, that of "wartime leader," which they, and he in turn, were quick to exploit. This role was used at once to silence all criticism of the man and his words as unpatriotic, and to provide the auspices for a sustained assault upon civil liberties, environmental protections and general welfare. The perpetuation of this role of "wartime leader" is the primary reason—more important even than the greed for oilfields and the wish to blot out his father's failure—for the present determination to visit war upon Iraq, kill and maim countless people, and antagonize much of the world of which Mr. Bush had not heard until recently. The real iniquities of Saddam Hussein should be recognized, in this context, as the pretexts they are. His earlier atrocities went unmentioned as long as he was an ally of former Republican administrations, which were happy, in their time, to supply him with weapons. I think that someone who was maneuvered into office against the will of the electorate, as Mr. Bush was, should be allowed to make no governmental decisions (including judicial appointments) that might outlast his questionable term, and if the reasons for war were many times greater than they have been said to be I would oppose anything of the kind under such "leadership." To arrange a war in order to be re-elected outdoes even the means employed in the last presidential election. Mr. Bush and his plans are a greater danger to the United States than Saddam Hussein. *W.S. Merwin*

State of the Union, 2003

I have not been to Jerusalem,
but Shirley talks about the bombs.
I have no god, but have seen the children praying
for it to stop. They pray to different gods.
The news is all old news again, repeated
like a bad habit, cheap tobacco, the social lie.

The children have seen so much death
that death means nothing to them now.
They wait in line for bread.
They wait in line for water.
Their eyes are black moons reflecting emptiness.
We've seen them a thousand times.

Soon, the President will speak.
He will have something to say about bombs
and freedom and our way of life.
I will turn the TV off. I always do.
Because I can't bear to look
at the monuments in his eyes.

Sam Hamill

New Hampshire, February 7, 2003

It's snowing again.
All day, reruns
of the blizzard of '78
newscasters vying
for bragging rights
how it was to go hungry
after they'd thumped
the vending machines empty
the weatherman clomping
four miles on snowshoes
to get to his mike
so he could explain
how three lows
could collide to create
a lineup of isobars
footage of state troopers
peering into the caked
windows of cars
backed up for white
miles on the interstate.

Nowhere, reruns
of the bombings in Vietnam
2 million civilians blown
apart, most of them children
under 16, children
always the least
able to dive
for cover when
all that tonnage bursts
from a blind sky.
Snow here is
weighting the pine trees
while we wait for the worst:
for war to begin.
Schools closed, how
the children
love a benign blizzard
a downhill scrimmage
of tubes and sleds. But who
remembers the blizzard
that burst on those other children?
Back then we called it
collateral damage
and will again.

Maxine Kumin

(Continued on Page 32)

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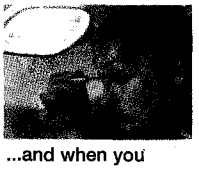

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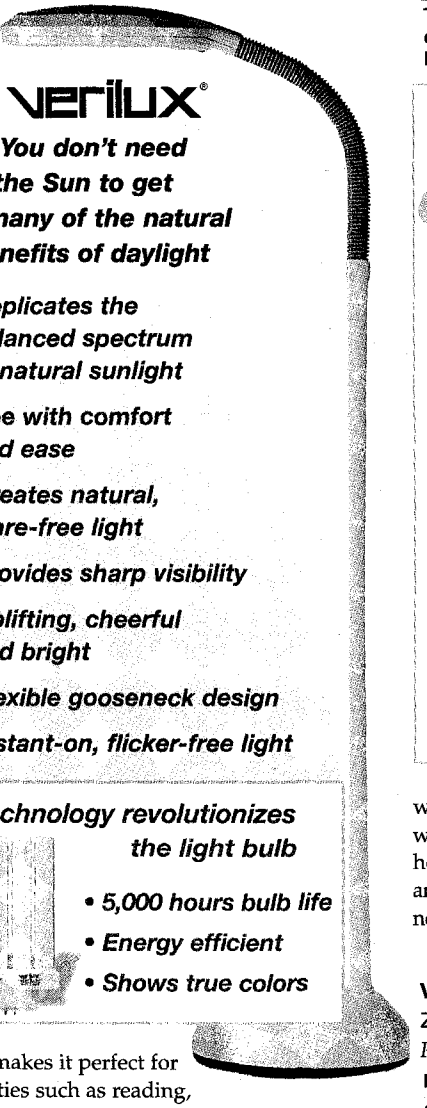

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—Jan L. GA

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—Edith L. NJ

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(Continued From Page 30)

Letter to a Fellow Activist

Still, I keep thinking it's not really fitting
To send a "no thanks" when I wasn't invited.
And I'm glad I won't have to be cold to a person
Apparently decent and kind, a reader
Whose outlook poems and fictions have broadened.

Loyal, I think, to this nation, I hereby
Inculpate myself for making slapdash,
Insufficient and tardy efforts to save it
From the brutal, disastrous, avoidable brink
Our misguided Executive and Congress have brought us to.
Demonstrations, petitions, and reasoning seldom
Make an impression on heat-packing chauvinists.
They don't give a flying...whatever, bent as they
Are on showing the world who's in charge.

The practice of politics (always beyond belief
Boring) will take care of *us* if we fail
To take care of *it*. Despair is suburban,
So we soldier on, casting our ballots for candidates
Who won't be elected, we write those who were,
We canvass and organize. No, in all honesty
I can't, at age sixty, pretend I would welcome
Being clubbed or imprisoned; but I do root for those
Nonviolent actions performed in the interest
Of liberty, justice, and peace—for Americans,
Sure, but as well for all people everywhere.
To save the skin of one Arab, Israeli, or Yank
Would I write an obvious poem? You bet I would!
If only it *could* save. When gauging results
Of our deeds, though, I take an agnostic approach.
Seek justice: The aftermath's not in our hands.
Since "All wars are boyish," would that all war
Criminals present and future would grow up
And not dream it's cool or effective to pistol-whip
Erstwhile allies they've turned into enemies.
Should one ever resort to violent measures
In the name of a righteous cause? I'd say not.
Aren't we a global concern, the Blue Planet's
Symbiotic affiliates? Yes, because no man
Or nation's an island, entire of itself.
If the bell should toll for Iraq or for Palestine,
It will toll for these States and Israel, too—
For the threatened ideals of fair play and loveliness
Embodied in poems we're moved to live by.

PFC Corn here, reporting for peace watch.

Alfred Corn

Umoja: Each One of Us Counts

One went the way of water,
one crumpled under stone;
one climbed the air but plunged through fire,
one fought the fear alone.

Remember us, though we are gone.

A star flares on an epaulet,
a ball rolls in harm's way;
the glowing line onscreen goes flat,
an anonymous bullet strays—

Remember us! Do not forget!

One lay slathered in garlands,
one left only a smear;
one cracked a joke, smiled, then shrugged
to show he didn't care.

Do not forget that we were here.

Do those who failed still miss the wind,
that sweet breath from the sky?
Do they still covet rock and moss
or the swift, hard blink of the lizard's eye?

We walk on water, we are written on air.

Let us honor the lost, the snatched, the
relinquished,
those vanquished by glory, muted by shame.
Stand up in the silence they've left and listen:
those absent ones, unknown and unnamed—

remember!

their whispers fill the arena.

Rita Dove

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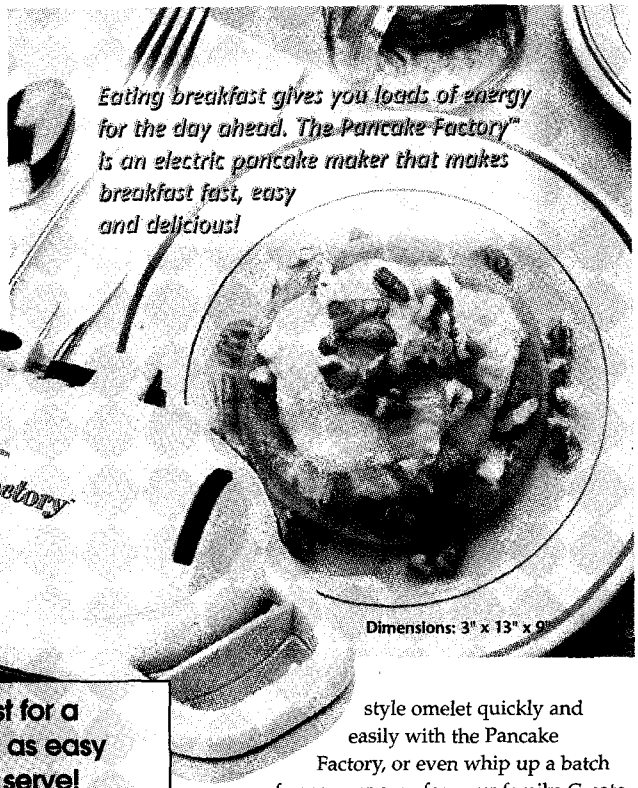
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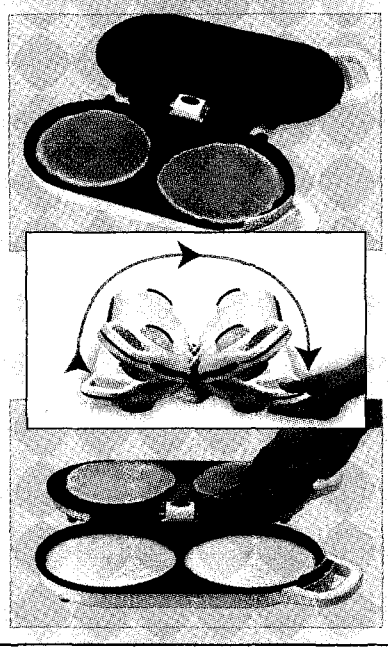
Making breakfast for a hungry "crew" is as easy as pour, flip and serve!



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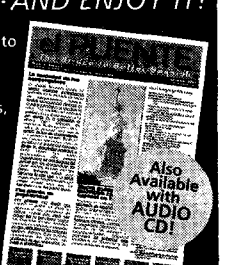

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AMANDLA! • SPIDER • CHI-HWA-SEON • FROM THE OTHER SIDE

If you've never watched Nelson Mandela dance, then you should know that he does a modified Locomotion, pumping his elbows like pistons to the immense, loving amusement of his people. They see his dancing is a little stiff, and they enjoy it all the more for knowing the reasons: advanced age, aristocratic bearing and many years of residence in a place that was bad for the joints. These factors may constrain Mandela's style, but they can't hamper his pleasure in the dance, or his supporters' joy at seeing him go—a joy that's crucial to Lee Hirsch's rousing documentary *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*.

Of course, misery also plays its role in the story. *Amandla!* recounts half a century of struggle against apartheid, as experienced and enacted through music. Pop songs, anthems, folk tunes, jazz compositions, cabaret numbers, street chants: As Hirsch shows, these were more than expressions of resistance. They were often its means as well, from the time of the first imposition of apartheid (a policy best understood as "good neighborliness," according to newsreel footage of Hendrik Verwoerd) up through the founding of a democratic South Africa. Cries of exultation were sometimes heard in this story—as when Mandela danced—but so, too, were cries, plain and simple.

Hirsch opens this subject with the opening of a grave. His film begins with footage shot in the 1990s in a paupers' cemetery, where family and friends took advantage of their newly won freedom by digging up the remains of Vuyisile Mini. The man whose skull you see being solemnly lifted from the dirt was hanged for his activism in the 1950s. Now his middle-aged children, who had never really known their father, are going to provide the decent burial that Verwoerd's regime denied him.

But who was Mini, to have earned a hanging? He was, among other accomplishments, a singer-songwriter, famous for his bass voice and a cheerful, bouncy tune called "Look Out, Verwoerd! The Black Man Is Coming!" The English translation, though approximate, tells you more of the song's substance than was understood by the average white South African. As Hirsch cuts among period footage, contemporary talking-head interviews and scenes of various people performing the song, you hear one witness remark on how white people *loved* those pretty sounds.

Let's say that Mini's tune is the first motif the film calls up from the grave of apartheid. Let's also say that this music expands as it rises, adding voices and tone colors and harmonic complications, shifting its rhythm with the unfolding of events: forced relocations, passbook laws, the Sharpeville massacre, the Soweto uprising. Although Hirsch presents this history using television methods—*Amandla!* was produced, in part, by HBO/Cinemax—his touch is so lively, his feeling for the subject so deep, that the sounds surge right past the documentary conventions. Witnesses such as Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela and Abdullah Ibrahim testify to periods of despair and years in exile; and yet you feel this movement (both political and musical) couldn't possibly have been contained. "The music comes out of the struggle," a young, present-day activist says at one point. His companions, protesting, seem to speak for the filmmaker and history alike when they tell him he's got it exactly wrong.

Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony had its premiere a year ago at the Sundance festival and is now opening for limited theatrical runs in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. It is humane and invigorating beyond anything else playing now. It is (forgive the convention) triumphant.

The first thing you will want to know about David Cronenberg's *Spider* is how it holds up against *The Fly*. Is it funny-creepy? Does it make you afraid, very afraid? Will you need to inventory your body parts before you can go to bed? No—nor are you likely to feel that the grim, unsettling goings-on in this movie could ever happen to you. Whereas Jeff Goldblum

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in *The Fly* started out like you or me, only more elongated, Ralph Fiennes in *Spider* is always a creature apart.

From the moment he steps into the picture, Fiennes is that grimy, shuffling, muttering bum you avoid on the street corner, perhaps wondering (as you pass by) how a mother's son ends up that way. By the end of the movie, you know the answer; and yet the character continues to be an object for contemplation, not a possibility in your flesh. This is very strange—because *Spider* is one of those Cronenberg films (like *Naked Lunch* and *eXistenZ*) that put you right into the main character's head, narrating from within a delusion.

Based on a novel by Patrick McGrath, who also wrote the screenplay, *Spider* is the story of Dennis Cleg (Fiennes) and his brief stay at a halfway house in London. It's a place from which psychiatric patients may make forays into the normal world—so normal, in this case, that Cleg's window looks out onto a brick wall and the tank of a gasworks. Cleg wanders along an oily canal or kills time in a severely underfurnished cafe and then retreats to his room, to work on a manuscript so important that he keeps the notebook hidden under the rug. Sometimes the camera shows what he's writing: cuneiform, you'd think, running across the page in four directions. More often, though, the camera translates for you, showing the story that Cleg is trying to piece together in his patterned pencil strokes.

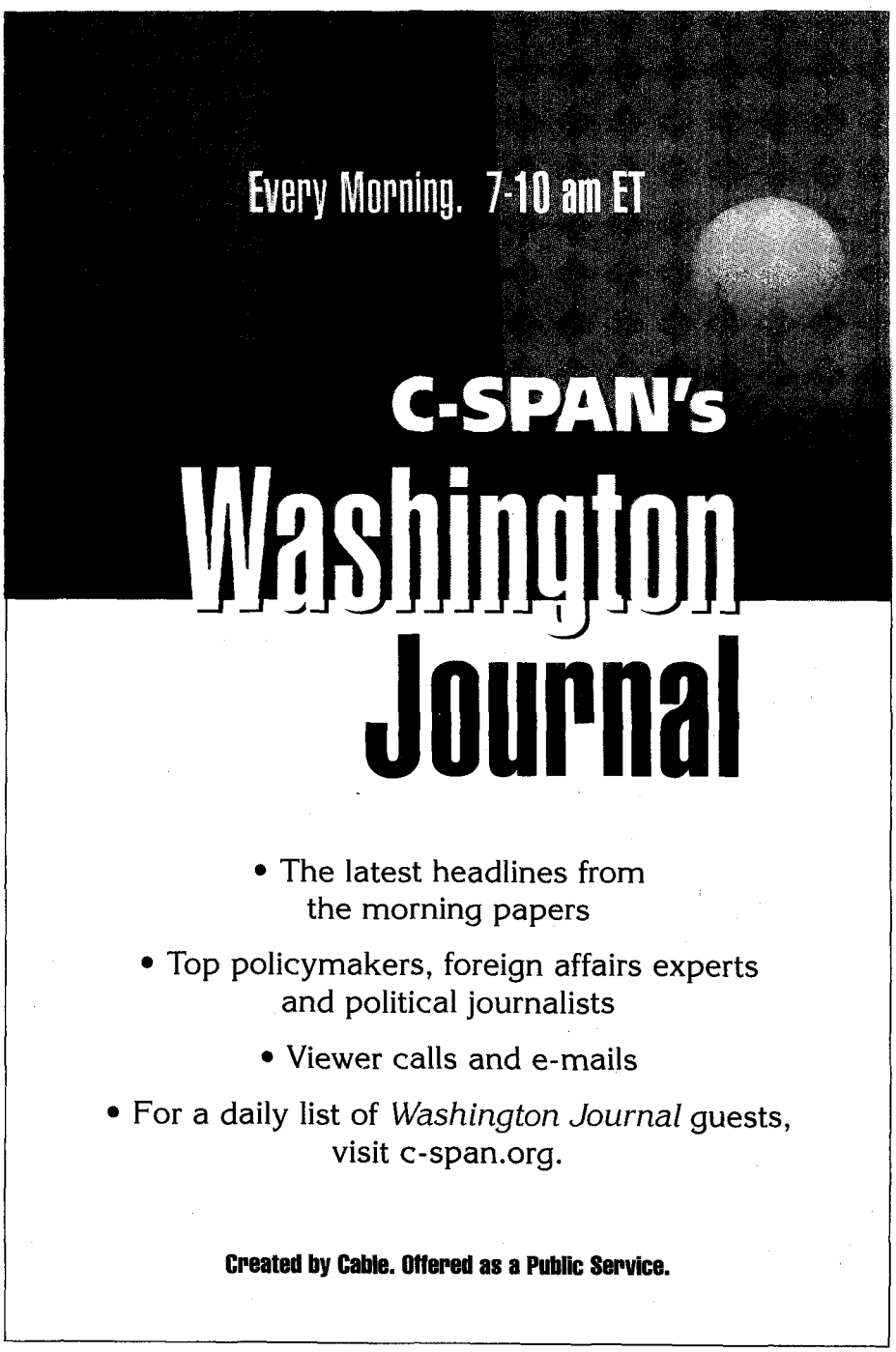
It's the story of a weak, drunken father (Gabriel Byrne), a loving mother (Miranda Richardson) and a cackling, bosomy blond witch. Somehow, the witch supplanted the mother. Somehow, a body got kicked into the grave and everything blew apart, and now in the halfway house Cleg's room is filling with string, which he stretches from surface to surface in a suffocating web. "Only connect," Forster wrote in *Howards End*. But in *Spider*, Cleg has too many connections to make. They fracture his space into a jigsaw puzzle.

This movie about obsession, directed in Cronenberg's most obsessive style, might be unbearable to watch if it weren't for two of the actors. The first, of course, is Fiennes, who seems to have taken great pleasure in tormenting himself. Wearing four layers of clothing and an inch worth of nicotine stain, his hair stuck up like Samuel Beckett's, his speech cut down to grunts and an incomprehensible undertone, Fiennes seems far more at ease than when he's made into the romantic lead. For most actors, affliction is an opportunity to show off; for him, it's a refuge. Maybe that's why Cleg is such a comfortable presence in the movie, even though he's always working at figuring things out, always sharpening his nerves.

The other redeeming actor is Miranda Richardson. It's hard to write about her without violating *Spider*; but maybe I can say that the movie amounts to a conspiracy between her and Cronenberg, in which the two plot to astonish the audience. She gets to be muted, flamboyant, thoughtful, filthy, threatening, threatened, lovely, grotesque—and then, when you think she's done, another set of adjectives comes piling on. Within the achingly plain London of the movie, Richardson is the one uncontrollable, uncanny wonder, who alone is worth obsessing about.

Is *Spider* first-rate Cronenberg? Maybe not. There's something anecdotal about the movie—and unlike *The Fly* (which also was second tier, but was at least driven by pop outrageousness), *Spider* casts a spell of literary artfulness. Only Richardson can break it, and then only for so long.

It's odd to see decorum reasserted in a Cronenberg film, as it is at the end of *Spider*. But then, what isn't odd about this coldly deranged movie? Be strange, it seems to say. Be very strange.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Short Takes: Im Kwon-taek, the senior Korean filmmaker whose ninety-seventh picture, *Chunhyang*, was such a robust musical delight, is now back with his ninety-eighth. Titled *Chi-Hwa-Seon: Painted Fire*, it's a biopic about the nineteenth-century Korean artist Jang Seung-up, also known as Oh-won.

Comparisons with Mizoguchi's *Utamaro and His Five Women* are inevitable, and unfortunate, too, since the point of *Chi-Hwa-Seon* seems to be to make something rougher and earthier than the Japanese classic—in other words, something Korean. The film presents Oh-won's life in flashback, as it's recalled when the painter, now old and distinguished, receives a visit from a Japanese diplomat. How is it possible, the diplomat wants to know, that an uneducated man, a commoner, could become a great artist? The boozing, womanizing, rule-breaking Oh-won gives a snort, then thinks back over the whole story in brisk, elliptical fashion. I like the dense, inky washes that Oh-won brushes across his paper; I like the tall, black hats of the noble painters who cluster around him, and the scolding, greedy energy of Oh-won's lover, and the face of the lead actor, Choi Min-sik, who sometimes looks as weary and dreamy-eyed as Forest Whitaker.

Chantal Akerman's most recent video documentary, *From the Other Side*, is having a run through February 26 at Anthology Film Archives in New York City, where it will in effect transform the screen into a border. What you see in the picture, most often, is a wall—the barrier erected by the Immigration and Naturalization Service between Agua Prieta, Sonora, and Douglas, Arizona. Akerman traveled to Agua Prieta, interviewed a number of would-be emigrants (and the family members of emigrants who died crossing over) and took her characteristically stunning landscape shots of the border and its surroundings. Then, on the American side, she interviewed (among others) a middle-aged couple on a ranch, who explain the need for vigilante action against Mexicans sneaking into the United States. After September 11, you don't know what these people might do; and you certainly don't know if they're carrying diseases.

As reportage, *From the Other Side* perhaps suffers from too subtle a montage. (If you don't already know about the INS policy of driving illegal immigrants into the desert, and about the citizens' arrests and worse that these people have suffered, then you'll have a hard time piecing together the information from the film.) As human testimony, though, *From the Other Side* is unforgettably forceful. Its strongest features? The silences into which the witnesses fall, the volumes of empty space that haunt Akerman's frames, the deathly voids into which too many immigrants have disappeared.

Screening Schedule: If you're in the vicinity of the American Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria, Queens, please take note of a film series beginning February 22, selected by members of the New York Film Critics Circle. At the museum's request, the critics have programmed movies that they think have been unusually influential. Drop by on March 2, and you can see Biograph shorts directed by D.W. Griffith, introduced by J. Hoberman of the *Village Voice*, followed by some of Chaplin's shorts from his Mutual period, introduced by me. ■

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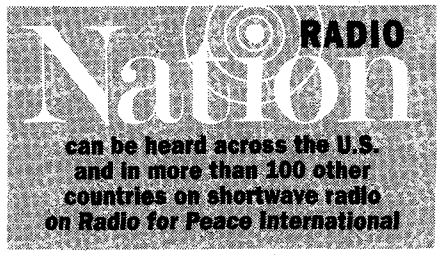

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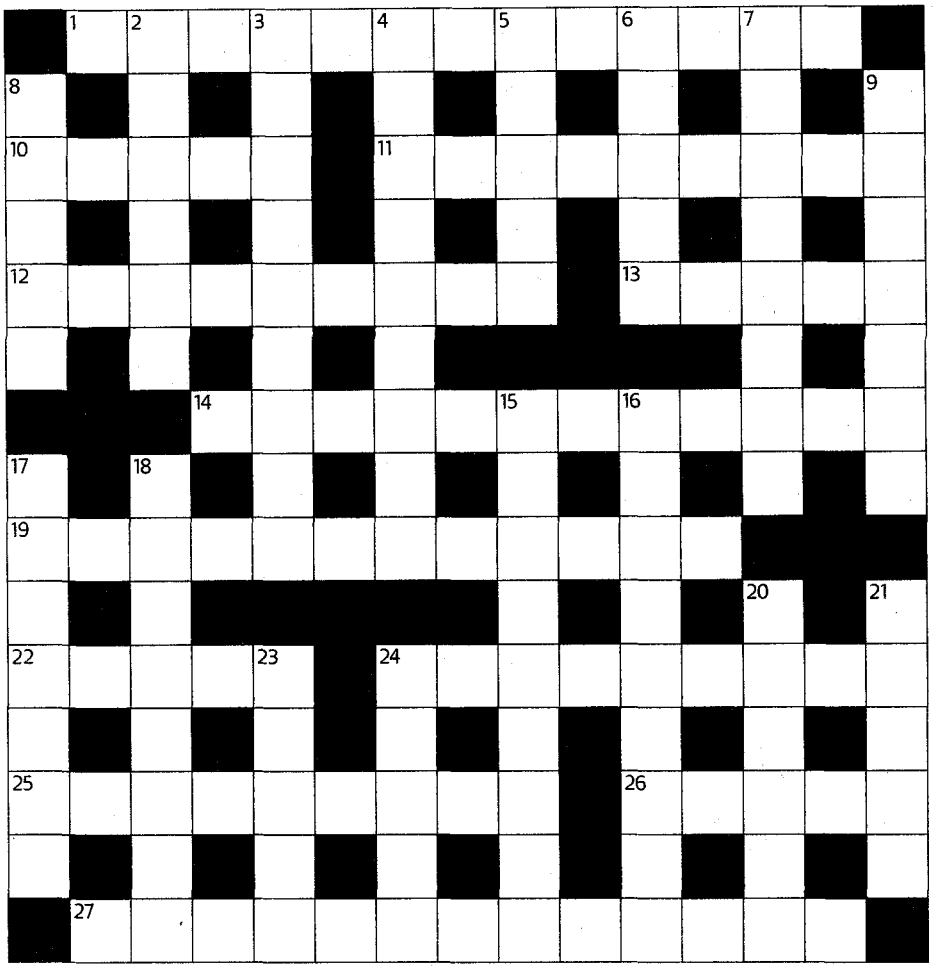

ACROSS

1 What's the point to pixie prisoners showing a labor union to you and me? We are almost embarrassed if we are! (4-9)

10 Some of us call Sam this way, but when we cry it we capitulate. (5)

11 One coming out of the French, however, with something to put in the pot. (9)

12 Evidently a common dog can't see what we sometimes blame for a lapse of judgment. (5,4)

13 Going on this Berlin waterway is wild experience. (5)

14 Not a well-balanced position, so look to a few added words I would sort of need meeting the German wartime group. (12)

19 A gun-toter in sort of pure surroundings, to a point—but such could certainly make the furniture look different! (12)

22 The lawyer doesn't have a head for whatever one might expect a hen to be at times. (5)

24 A Bach version seems to be thrown in the canal, being an occasion for a lot of drunks celebrating. (9)

25 Parker usually puts it on, with the worker getting a break, in a way. (4,5)

26 One of Sheridan's characters? A.R. would make a comer of him! (5)

27 The store's motto might imply that straight shooters ought to be appreciated! (2,3,2,6)

DOWN

2 Geometrician offering a not-so-good clue, but in short I would finish it. (6)

3 If it seems as though you can't get down, you may try for this. (5,4)

4 Your money could end up this way, when done badly at the Post Office before you take a seat. (2,7)

5 Not what the wrecker has underfoot, usually—although boats get wrecked this way. (5)

6 You might easily find it so a few small quantities are implied. (5)

7 Even under bad conditions where the first point is lost, one gets rather scared this way. (8)

8 You might see a guardsman wearing one when the double-decker goes past. (5)

9 One way to get onto the property again is to let go! (7)

15 Evidently the land is not dear, but we like to get purchase this way. (4-5)

16 Not exactly a nightmare, but you wouldn't expect one in the first place! (4,5)

17 To think things over has confused certain holy men! (7)

18 In Wyoming the revered revolutionary has a hankering, but needs direction in the end. (8)

20 Usually they are not the kind that can stick next to plate. (6)

21 In a sneaky way, direction is given to an English writer of romances and plays. (5)

23 Bunny loses his tail, otherwise "my master" appears… (5)

24 …the bunny being a best version, but a small one. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2882

W	I	D	E	O	P	E	N	■	S	P	A	C	E	S
I	■	A	■	U	■	L	■	P	■	O	■	O	■	T
N	A	M	E	T	A	G	■	A	T	L	A	N	T	A
D	■	O	■	P	■	R	■	Y	■	K	■	C	■	N
P	A	N	E	L	■	E	G	O	M	A	N	I	A	C
I	■	■	■	A	■	C	■	P	■	■	■	E	■	E
P	E	T	T	Y	■	O	F	F	I	C	E	R	S	■
E	■	R	■	E	■	■	■	■	■	R	■	G	■	S
■	B	O	L	D	F	A	C	E	■	O	V	E	R	T
S	■	U	■	■	■	R	■	N	■	W	■	■	■	R
P	A	S	S	W	O	R	D	S	■	S	A	T	I	E
A	■	S	■	H	■	E	■	U	■	N	■	R	■	S
D	I	E	S	E	L	S	■	I	R	E	N	I	C	S
E	■	A	■	E	■	T	■	T	■	S	■	E	■	E
D	O	U	B	L	E	■	F	E	A	T	U	R	E	S

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